Todd McFarlane unleashes SPAWN

The Legends of Neal Adams

COMICS

#27
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BATMAN RETURNS

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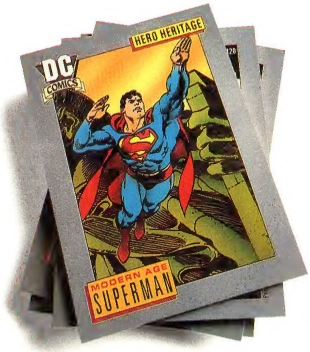

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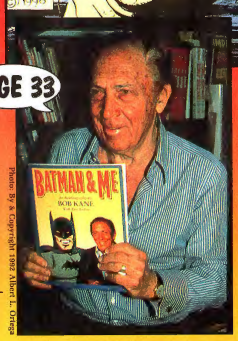

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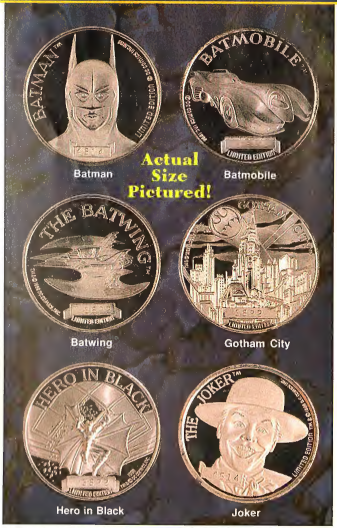

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COMICS SCENE RETURNS with **Grant Morrison, Nancy Collins** and **Batman Returns** real soon—that's only part of **COMICS SCENE #28 on sale June 23, 1992.**

WORD BALLOONS

Creative Rites

He began somewhere in your imagination, a new twist on an old variation. You sketch out a face, a bit of costume, the ubiquitous cape, the ever-present cowl. His powers are dutifully listed on the side. You pencil in a symbol in the center of his chest and then laboriously write in a copyright line at the bottom.

Congratulations! You've just created a comics character.

And now, it's time to get screwed over.

That, after all, is a glorious tradition in the annals of comic book publishing—actually, some might say, in *any* kind of publishing. Maybe it's an inheritance from comic strips, properties long owned, with notable exceptions, by newspaper syndicates which could mostly do what they wanted.

Over a half-century, the main concern in comic books, naturally, has been fair and better pay. More intense, red-hot questions emerged in the last two decades regarding credit (who really created what when?), credit appropriation (is so-and-so taking the fame for something he didn't do?), reprint fees, return of original art, royalties, the nature of work-for-hire contracts, copyrights, self-publishing and, finally, creative control.

These creators' rights have sparked countless convention panels, fanzine articles and computer bulletin board discussions. For some, the debate is almost ritualistic—a frenzied dance championing stands with which few rational fans could disagree. The intensity of the debates is overwhelming, all wrapped up, as they are, in money and ego.

Still, fair's fair, isn't it? And if you created a character, no matter what the contractual circumstances, you *deserve* credit. Whether you'll get it (to your satisfaction) and to what extent you'll share in any profits or crucial decisions is another matter. For example, who determines a series' creative direction? Who increases the print run, changes printers or cancels the book? Will the company own that copyright line, or do you?

Various folks have approached these problems in different ways. Such creators as Jack Katz, Wendy & Richard Pini and Dave Sim pioneered self-publishing, allowing them some control of their own destinies. Pacific Comics offered creators like Jack Kirby, Dave Stevens and Mike Grell the chance to own their own creations, an idea which has become an independent comics standard upheld by First, Eclipse, Kitchen Sink, Dark Horse, Tundra and many others. Marvel and DC responded with creator-owned imprints (Epic and Piranha Press) and beefed up pay schedule, royalty and benefit programs. In the war's latest engagement, Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Erik Larsen and more of Marvel's hottest other talents departed to assemble at Malibu Graphics as the creator-controlled Image imprint.

Image's Todd McFarlane discusses his new entry *Spawn* and the reasons behind his Marvel exit on page 18. He also pays tribute to earlier crusading creators like Grell, Kirby and Neal Adams. And on page 22, Adams addresses his own opinion-maker image, explaining why he formed Continuity Comics, the line primarily featuring his own creations. (Fans owe Adams heartfelt thanks for his '70s efforts to publicly persuade DC to take care of ailing Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.)

From all appearances, Bob Kane, Siegel and Shuster's contemporary, more easily survived DC's creative rites. Nevertheless, in previewing *Batman Returns*, Kane reveals Hollywood's view of the perfect comics creator: Somebody who made up the characters and then remains (mostly) silent when they're adapted to another medium. But not always—advised by Charles Schulz and Jim Davis, Mike Peters chose the folks to animate *Mother Goose & Grimm* and then helped create the cartoons himself.

Other creative rites are examined this issue with Jim Starlin, whose *Dreadstar* was a pioneering, self-owned title; Mark Schultz, who slowly crafts a masterwork known as *Xenozoic Tales* for an incredibly patient publisher and readership; and Steve Miller, who created *Rust*, saw others take it over and has now reclaimed his own character.

All of these creators (and the many unnamed here) have looked into their imaginations for more than 50 years. Then with paper, pencil and typewriter, they made new characters, heroes and villains, comic relief and curmudgeons, out of the nothing that was before.

Those are the *true* creative rites.

—David McDonnell/Editor

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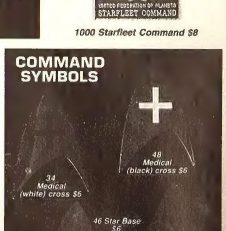

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All Rust Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1991, 1992 Steve Miller/Courtesy Malibu Art: Phillip Hester/Ande Parks

This time, nothing will corrode that steel-clad man known as Rust.

Back in 1987, writer and colorist Steve Miller invented *Rust*—the strange tale of policeman Scott Baker, who accidentally falls into a vat of experimental liquid rust and is radically transformed. Forced to coat his entire body with an armor of junkyard metal scraps or suffer excruciating pain as the chemical corrodes his skin, his physical appearance bars him from ever again living a normal life. This unique series became a cult hit in a 20-issue run from Now Comics, but Miller never got to develop his vision of the character. After crafting the first two issues, the series was passed on to a succession of other writers.

Now, five years later, *Rust* is back, but the character's all Miller's.

By ANYA MARTIN

Premiering in April under the Adventure Comics imprint, *Rust* will join a steadily-increasing line of creator-owned properties published by Malibu Graphics. The all-new monthly color series will be written and colored by Miller (*Doom Patrol* #9) pencilled by Phillip (*Fringe*) Hester and inked by Ande (*Straw Men*) Parks. The first issue boasts a full-color Dave Dorman cover. While Malibu has acquired a back-stock of the original *Rust* series, Miller has chosen to return to the beginning and retell the origin.

"In essence, the best way to think about it might be as a movie remake," offers Miller, "not a sequel, but a remake. In the ensuing four years until I recovered the rights to *Rust*, my vision changed a bit, but there always was a wish: 'Wouldn't it be fun to go back?'"

Miller got his chance last spring when Hester, a longtime friend, called him to report that the property was up for auction as part of Now Comics' then-filing of bankruptcy. With the support of Adventure publisher David Olbrich, Miller reacquired *Rust*'s rights, and placed it immediately with Adventure.

"The old *Rust* had some kind of corrosive skin, but I don't know what they did with it," notes Miller, admitting he never kept up with the

Art: Phillip Hester

A redefined *Rust* returns to comics to prove his mettle.

I became fascinated with it. I decided that if *Watchmen* explored the new breed of the *team* superhero book, I wanted to do a book focusing on the new breed of the *solo* superhero," says Miller.

"The character most influential on Rust," he adds, laughing, "might actually be Bill Bixby's *Incredible Hulk*. In every episode, you had a tragic character who was a nice guy, but circumstances worked against him. I like the idea of the Hitchcockian hero who is innocent, but everything gets turned against him anyway."

Rust might also be seen, Miller suggests, as a tragic victim of his physical appearance, akin to the Universal movie monsters of the '30s and '40s: "What he looks like now is a human figure with metal parts smashed into his body. You can't see his skin. What's happening is that his skin is literally eating the metal, so he must continually replace it. If he doesn't, the liquid rust starts eating

Artist Phillip Hester has "more sophisticated, arty" designs in store for *Rust*.

him. His coating thus becomes a metaphor for the walls we all have between each other, to communicate, to really knowing each other. His walls are just more visible. That's my entry way into discussing personal politics: How people refuse to communicate, not because they can't, but because they don't wish to.

Miller allows that even with the comics industry publishing more and more non-superhero titles, a creator does take a risk if he doesn't play the game to some extent. "You can look at

Photo: Courtesy Steve Miller

series after leaving the book. Thus, readers shouldn't expect much similarity between specific events in the new and old series. Miller stresses that his original intention was to create a character who was not a superhero, but merely a "super-being."

Miller and Rob (*Scimidar*) Davis were collaborating on several straightforward superhero adventures, trying to break into the comics industry, when Tony Caputo, publisher of Now Comics, approached Miller to create a comic about "an ugly guy who hangs out with bums," emphasizing mood over heroics. Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons had much more influence on *Rust* than such traditional metal-based superheroes as Metamorpho and Iron Man.

"*Watchmen* had just come out, and

Creator Steve Miller's dream to return to *Rust* has now come true.

Sandman and see that there's virtually nothing in it that would make it a superhero book at all, yet Sandman has a visual look that is kind of superheroish. There are many people now who feel it's not necessary to keep comics at the lowest possible denominator. Again, Rust has powers, he has this strong science fiction aspect to his life, but he's not a 'hero.' "

What appeals to Miller most about his first professional creation is Rust's potential for psychological exploration. Starting from this angle, the writer plans to take the book in directions he always wanted to take it, directions which he hopes will excite both old and new fans.

"A big frustration comes from the fact that as long as the metal is all on him, he doesn't feel any different," Miller explains. "The accident doesn't change his mind in any way. It doesn't do anything to him inside. His heart beats the same. His brain still works. He knows that underneath his metal skin, everything else stays normal. What he's continually fighting is the idea that visual looks are so important. People don't usually take the time to look inside. So many people make decisions about others by skin color or how the person dresses or other outward aspects that aren't fundamental to the inside person."

Miller, therefore, is devoting time not to Steve Baker's fall into the chemical vat, but rather to the emotional ramifications of his physical change. Traditional comics typically spend a lot of time on origin stories, but in *Rust*, Baker's physical transformation occurs in just the first three pages of issue #1.

"For people who like a superhero origin story, that's all they're going to get," Miller explains. "His body goes through the transformation in three pages, he becomes Rust physically; it takes four issues for him to become Rust emotionally."

Rust, as a character, doesn't fight crime like a typical comics hero does. The second storyline (issues #6-11) makes him a detective aiding his old partner in a drug ring investigation.

"The syndicate deals drugs, but it's not evil," Miller says, stressing that he wants to make any villains human and believable and never of "super" proportions. "Their leader, Angel McDermott, is a grown-up 20-to-30-year-old character still into the idealism of using drugs as a philosophical tool. He's not into profit margins. There are no bloodfests or shootouts. I think it's too easy to cast drug dealers as simply evil."

The storyline's other focus concerns an art agent promoting these huge sculptures that Rust creates as his emotions manipulate metal in his sleep. That's another side effect of the accident which he must learn to control and live with.

Rust Cover Art: By & Copyright 1992 Dave Dorman

All Other Rust Art: Phillip Hester/Anele Parks

With occasional exceptions, "the conflicts that we encounter are values, not fistfights," says the writer.

Returning to the theme of physical appearance vs. internal integrity, Miller adds, "The opportunity to show values clashing is one of the strongest narrative viewpoints. What I find to be one of the major problems in mainstream comics is, that when two people oppose each other, the conflict is physical rather than intellectual. In our daily lives, the conflicts that we encounter are values, not fistfights."

Neither, according to Miller, is Rust portrayed especially as the victim of the big, bad corporation that manufactures an environmentally unsound product. While he does visit Marlon Labs to demand a cure, causing all manner of chaos in the parking lot as his emotions send cars flying, he finds Laura Bridge, inventor of liquid rust, baffled but willing to help. Unfortunately, Bridge informs him that the "procedure" that might cure him may also kill him. Then again, he might die from his condition.

Rust undergoes a quick physical transformation, but he'll take several issues to iron out his emotional state.

Hester thinks it's great to draw "a character about whom nothing is normal."

"The environmental aspect of the liquid rust was that it was environmentally damaging, but my conception was that it was being created to be used in place of cutters or an arc-welding torch," explains Miller, articulating the subtle difference between traditional comics logic and his real-world approach. "You would never get 100 percent pure liquid rust. Actually, things used industrially usually consist of 3 percent of the actual chemical and 97 percent water. The idea of Rust being created by the evil corporation is too simple. Creating a weapon is something you would see in *Iron Man*, it's comic-booky. Whereas my conception is, what if this *really* happened? Right now, it's more topical than ever with Dow Corning looking like they may be guilty of criminal neglect over 25 to 30 years with regard to [silicone] breast implants. That's realistic. Something done for a profit margin is a real thing. Talking about greed, it can work in this way."

This doesn't mean that Miller wouldn't like to play around with environmental issues. He feels strongly about such issues and, besides, Rust has a direct "visual tie-in" to the whole issue of recycling.

"Environmental issues aren't inherently part of the character, but rust is a natural process," Miller explains. "Nature doesn't have any problem breaking down metal. It does have a problem with plastic and nuclear waste. I do want to do some kind of environmental story, but I'm not sure what form it would take. On one hand, it would be really fun to have Rust in front of Russian whaling ships. Even if they do fire the cannons, it's not going to hurt him."

The first priority for Miller has been developing plausible stories that reflect real-life situations and traumas. Again, no fistfights and explosions, but rather, for example, a wife dealing with the supposed death of her husband, a man facing the fact that he can never be a true husband again.

"After the drug/art story, which finishes in issue #10 or 11, I'll be getting to the stories that I've been *really* wanting to tell," he reveals. "Taking the format of something like *Quantum Leap*, the main character will be the same, except he'll land in a totally different milieu in every story.

"In tone, the best analogy might be an urban *Concrete*. The basis for all the stories will be character-generated. There won't be any costumes, any alien invasions, Rust saving the world, that kind of thing. While getting my B.A. in fiction writing at the University of Kansas, the first thing I was taught was that in fantastic literature—such as science fiction or fantasy—you can only have *one* unbelievable idea. You start your story there, but your audience will only give you a certain amount of disbelief. So, I start with the chemical accident that creates Rust, but from there, everything else is real."

As Rust's physical appearance becomes a metaphor to Miller, the torment in Rust's dreams is reflected physically as well as in the stunning, chaotic metal sculptures that appear overnight in the junkyard where he hides out in the series' first issue. After he misinterprets a friendly kiss and hug between his grieving wife and partner Jerry, out of his troubled sleep, he creates an exotic, sensual figure of a man and woman locked in an embrace.

The dream sequences are one of the most intriguing aspects to drawing *Rust*, according to penciller Philip Hester. "In the fourth issue, there's a dream sequence where we really get to see the full extent of what he can do with his body and his powers," Hester explains. "I tried to make Rust look different in each panel to reflect what he was sculpting. In one panel, he imagines using his powers like a clichéd superhero, so we drew him in a Jack Kirby mode. In another, he's pursuing a career as an artist, so I drew him in a more sophisticated, arty way. It was a challenge to make these parts really seem like dreams, but yet draw them so they are consistent with the rest of the book."

Ever since he had been offered a chance to draw the original *Rust* three times and nothing came of his efforts, Hester has been fond of Rust because of his unique situation and physical appearance.

"I've always had a certain attraction to all the oddball/loser characters from the '60s and the '70s like Brother

(continued on page 60)

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs

With intricate detail, Mark Schultz weaves stunning "Xenozoic Tales."

□

By PHILIP NUTMAN

□

Creating a self-contained world composed of your favorite dramatic elements and bringing it to life in a comic book is an achievement in itself. Inventing a world of real-life characters with a readership enamored enough to follow their adventures month after month is a whole other ball game. For every Frank Castle or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, there's a dozen John Does of Planet X.

Of course, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby went one better and created an entire universe. More recently, Frank Miller designed *Sin City*, and in 1982, in Pennsylvania, commercial illustrator Mark Schultz imagined the future he termed the Xenozoic. While drawing pictures of lawnmowers, the young artist daydreamed about big, beautiful '50s cars, a gorgeous heroine called Hannah Dundee, and dinosaurs by the dozen.

Quitting advertising, Schultz put pen to paper, and those daydreams became a reality. Thanks to independent publisher Kitchen Sink Press, comics readers got to share that reality, too. Soon, Schultz achieved critical acclaim, won a prestigious Harvey award, and *Xenozoic Tales*, a world 600 years into the future of Cadillacs and dinosaurs, became one of comicdom's most popular black and white books.

"I'm a frustrated storyteller," Schultz admits. "And back when I was doing commercial art, I used to

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs Trademark General Motors Corporation

All Art Copyright 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 Mark Schultz

GREEN AIR
SURE, JACK
ALL SAILPLANES MUST MOVE FORWARD TO STAY ALOFT. ONCE I'M UP, GRAVITY WILL BEGIN PULLING ME IN A SHALLOW DOWNHILL GLIDE!—ONE FOOT DOWN FOR EVERY 2.5 FORWARD...
TO STAY UP, I NEED LIFT... GREEN AIR. THE SUN WARMS THE EARTH, WHICH IN TURN THROWS COLUMNS OF HEATED AIR TO THE SKY
THESE THERMAL UPDRAFTS WILL PUSH ME BACK UPSTAIRS
NICE DAY FOR SOARING, REMFRO!
EXCELLENT DAY FOR SOARING!
WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN BE SO SURE OF SOMETHIN' YOU CAN'T SEE...
OH, DAVE WILL!
WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME AGAIN HOW THIS IS SUPPOSED TO WORK...
AND I WON'T PROMISE YOUR PLANE WILL EVEN GET OFF THE GROUND...
YOUR RESTORATION IS FLAWLESS, JACK. YOU'VE EXECUTED ALL MY SPECIFICATIONS PRECISELY!
2

All kinds of dinosaurs exist in Mark Schultz's Xenozoic world, whether they're Cadillacs or pterodactyls.

ask myself, 'If I got to do comics for a living, what would I do?' Inevitably, the things I loved influenced me. The adventure stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, *King Kong* and other '30s movies like *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the *Mad Max* films—especially *The Road Warrior*. All this stuff started tumbling around in my brain. I combined them—and, over several years, I evolved the notion of the Xenozoic."

The Xenozoic era is chaotic and post-apocalyptic. By the late 20th century, drastic ecological changes forced mankind to seek shelter beneath Earth's surface. By 2020, cataclysmic geologic upheavals caused the planet's surface to churn. Billions died. Some 450 years later, when the survivors return to the surface, they discover an illogical world in which dinosaurs roam and Cadillacs still run. Working from this premise, Schultz has found a rich mythology and loyal audience.

Since Schultz had spent much of his childhood drawing dinosaurs, they were an obvious choice to populate his strange new world. "I remember being attracted to dinosaurs before I developed an interest in anything else. I discovered a book about them when I was four or five years old and was immediately captivated," the writer/artist recalls. "This was around the time that the giant monster movie cycle was still going, films like *Gorgo* [1961], and the advertisements excited me. I wanted to see these movies, but was too young. I wanted to know what these huge creatures were. My parents got me a book from the library, and it was incredible—these creatures existed before man; they were *real*! That knowledge leaves a big impact on a child's imagination.

"Dinosaurs are the dragons of the scientific age," Schultz notes. "The symbol of the dragon reverberates in the human subconscious. I don't know why, but there's obviously a need that that symbol fulfills. As a species, we've evolved to a point where we can't accept dragons as a supernatural force anymore, but we know dinosaurs existed due to the physical evidence. They definitely touch a primal nerve in our collective imagination. Kids love them, and there are very few adults who aren't interested in them. You only have to pick up a copy of *Discover* magazine to see that's true. Nearly every issue has an article on dinosaurs or some related topic. People love learning about them."

Growing up around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Schultz had access to one of the greatest dinosaur exhibits in the world, housed in the Carnegie Natural History Museum. He remembers his first visit with great affection. "The exhibit which impressed me the most was the tyrannosaurus skeleton. It towered above me, and as a little kid, coming face to face with something of that size was incredible, both terrifying and awe-inspiring."

But dinosaurs are only one element of what makes *Xenozoic Tales* so attractive to readers, and to Schultz himself. Aside from the story's science fiction and adventure aspects, there are great cars and the statuesque scientist Hannah Dundee, the kind of slinky, gutsy heroine no tale should be without. *Xenozoic*, however, isn't just a romp through the artist's obsessions. It's a solid, character-driven drama. Part of the book's charm comes from the tension between Dundee, an emissary from the city of Wassoon (Washington DC), and mechanic/shaman Jack "Cadillac" Tenrec, a resident of the City in the Sea (the ruins of New York), as they explore their world.

"Before I came up with the concept, I really never paid attention to cars that much," confesses the artist. "I just loved the designs of that period. The late '40s/early '50s, were, I think, the high point for automotive design. I know nothing about the workings of those cars, but I love the way they look. They were the dinosaurs of the automotive industry—

THE GROWING POOL
THIS IS A STORY ABOUT... HOPE AND MYSTERY AND FACTS.
HARD FACTS AS BRIGHT AND METALLIC AS A DIAMOND CUT AS SURELY AND HARD TO GRIP AS A MOIST KNOT OF STRING
AND ASSUMED FACTS DEVIOUS AND SLIPPERY EVASIVE OFFERING NO RESISTANCE AS THEY SOFTLY EXCUSE
AND ONE HOLDS A MOMENT FULLY ON THE FACTS... AND THAT'S A FACT
BEFORE WE BEGIN, LET'S STEP BACK FOR A MOMENT BEFORE THE SENTIMENTS... BUCKLED AND CRUMPLED
BACK DURING THE EARLY CHAPTERS, WHEN HE PONDERED ATMOSPHERE, MOOD, BACKDROP, AND THE "HEAD-BOOK"... IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO HAVE A LONG-RUNNING ARTIST-INVENTION...
THEN HE'S GOT TO START NATURALLY DRAWING THE DESERTED PANELS IT ANTICIPATES...

All Art: Mark Schultz/Courtesy Kitchen Sink Press

Despite appearances, Schultz doesn't want his stories to come off as "stupid and sexist when it comes to depicting female characters."

Even though Jack and Hannah do some soul-searching in future *Xenozoic Tales*, "There'll be dinosaur fights along the way," Schultz promises.

big, grandiose, streamlined creatures. They represented an evolutionary peak before the industry stopped paying attention to good design and went for gimmicks. But for four or five years, cars were incredibly beautiful, well-designed machines."

Schultz's style has also attracted a loyal following. Anyone familiar with classic EC Comics like *Tales from the Crypt* and *Weird Science* can immediately tell which great artists have had the most influence on Schultz's work. The original *Xenozoic* stories echo the mood and style of Wally Wood, with more than a passing nod to early Frank Frazetta. Later issues tip their hat to Al Williamson, Alex Raymond and *Prince Valiant* creator Hal Foster, all of whom Schultz readily admits are leading lights in his artistic canon. It's this classic comic-book aesthetic which has won Schultz both critical praise and the admiration of fans and professionals.

"I've never really had much of an option to work in color," he reveals. "And to do what I want to do, I've pretty much been restricted to working in black and white. I enjoy it—I love black and white films—and I try to use it as a positive quality instead of a drawback. I try to emphasize the composition, the atmosphere, lighting effects, things I feel can be lost with color. In this respect, Al Williamson has been a big influence on me, particularly his *Secret Agent X-9* strips, which showed me how to use black and white to its fullest potential. Also Alex Raymond's *Rip Kirby*. Once I started paying attention to those works, I realized there are certain things you can do in color, and techniques you must use for black and white. You can't carelessly use one or the other, you have to focus on techniques and compositions which work well in black and white.

"The greatest teachers in the world are Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. Although much of their work appeared in color, when you see the black and white originals, you realize what masterful technicians they were. The art without the color stands on its own, and you can't say that about a lot of comics artwork being produced today. Alex Toth is another great example. He worked with color much of the time, but he would leave open areas for color without a black line around it—those kinds of tricks. He was very conscious of what he was doing and how color would affect his work."

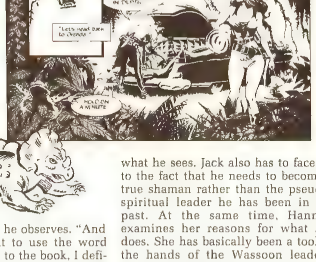
Schultz has a formal background in art and graduated from college with a BFA in painting, but admits he doesn't use most of what he learned at school. For the type of art which brings *Xenozoic* to life, his study of Williamson, Raymond and Toth's work has been invaluable. "It's ironic, most of my art education was working with paint and color, and I've almost totally jettisoned that part of my training. Unfortunately, I didn't learn much about the fundamentals of draughtsmanship when I was in college, so it has really been on-the-job training for me while I've been doing the book. I try to learn more about drawing with each issue. There are always a few problems I have to solve, so every issue is an artistic challenge."

Schultz admits he's a slow worker. On a good week, he can produce two fully-pencilled pages. "It's hard enough to bring the human body to life, but in addition to that, I make it tough on myself, because my favorite kinds of stories are filled with little details. *Prince Valiant*'s a great example. Hal Foster always had his characters doing something, even if it was only everyday stuff. I like my characters to be involved in things because it brings them to life. Working with that kind of detail takes time, especially if you produce fully-realized pencils, the way I do. It would be different if I just had a fistfight every two pages."

The results justify the time he takes. Every panel of a *Xenozoic* story is lovingly crafted. The downside, however, is that he only produces one or two issues a year. For most books, such a long wait between installments would guarantee dwindling sales and the kiss of death. Fortunately, that's not the case with *Xenozoic*, and Schultz

Hannah's return to Wassoon means political intrigue and danger for her and Jack.

Cars meant little to Schultz before he introduced Hannah and Jack to a world of Cadillacs and dinosaurs.


WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THESE GANG'S?
WELL... THEY'RE WELCOME CHIEFS. THAT TAR-LEOPARD WATCH THEY WORE IN DUTTA.
"LET'S HAVE DAN DO A DEMO."
HOLD ON A MINUTE

One of the best reasons to recommend *Xenozoic Tales* is to watch Schultz's talent as a storyteller grow. As he has found his feet as a writer, his characters have taken on a greater depth and for the next few issues, starting with #12, Schultz intends to explore Hannah and Jack's motivations.

"Events are going to get much more complex with this issue. Jack and Hannah arrive in Wassoon and there's political intrigue going on," reveals the author. "The Wassoon leaders are plotting to win Jack over to their side, but he's about to undergo a spiritual nervous breakdown. Once he goes through this, he'll have to rebuild himself and take a hard look in the mirror and find out if he likes what he sees. Jack also has to face up to the fact that he needs to become a true shaman rather than the pseudo-spiritual leader he has been in the past. At the same time, Hannah examines her reasons for what she does. She has basically been a tool in the hands of the Wassoon leaders, and she's going to question why she has allowed herself to be used."

If all this sounds less than exciting, worry not. "There'll be dinosaur fights along the way," promises Schultz. "And Jack's ultimate goal will be to return to the City in the Sea and oust the villains who have taken control during his trip to Wassoon. I'm attempting to give the characters more depth while developing some major dramatic conflicts and give the story more substance. It's certainly the biggest challenge I've set myself as a storyteller."

And the book's dramatic scope isn't the only thing expanding in the coming months. Since Kitchen Sink has now entered into an agreement with General Motors to license the use of the word Cadillac, a wide range of *Xenozoic Tales* merchandising will soon appear, beginning with a limited edition seriograph print. Issue #12 also marks the first use of the book's subtitle. From now on,

(continued on page 66)

is heartened by the loyalty of the book's core readership.

"I've tried working faster, but I'm not comfortable," he says. "If I did try to get more issues out, the quality would suffer. If I'm going to invest as much time and energy as it takes to produce a comic book, then I'm going to use that time and energy to produce something I'm happy with. Denis Kitchen is the kind of publisher who would rather see something done well than rushed to meet a deadline, and I'm very fortunate to have faithful readers who'll put up with my inability to do more issues a year."

First and foremost, Schultz produces *Xenozoic Tales* to satisfy his need to tell stories and please himself. "I think people respond favorably when they can see the artist really enjoys what he's doing, that the quality of work is important to the creator. Perhaps that's why the readers are so loyal. They can see the love I invest in the book."

What *Xenozoic*'s creator finds most satisfying about audience response is the number of people who care about the title's ecological underpinnings and appreciate his presentation of Hannah Dundee as a real woman. "Action and adventure stories have always been a bit stupid and sexist when it comes to depicting female characters," he observes. "And while I don't want to use the word feminist in relation to the book, I definitely try to bring a sense of equality to the characters of Jack and Hannah. I mean, *Xenozoic* is very much a 'guilty pleasure' comic—action, adventure, curvaceous women, a firm-muscled hero with a square jaw—in the old pulp tradition, but I don't want it to be as stupid or sexist as most of those stories were. Probably the biggest influence on me are the old Edgar Rice Burroughs books—*Tarzan, John Carter of Mars*, all that stuff, but, when it comes down to the way Burroughs presents women, it's so much crap. He could never get beyond that Victorian notion that a woman is just there to be rescued and adore the hero.

"But then, there's a second camp of readers who seem to purely love the book for its artwork. These are people who really love the EC style and are very happy someone is working in that manner. I don't know whether they actually read the stories or just look at the art. Either way, if they enjoy it, that's fine."

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DARK HORSE COMICS

The newest *Spawn* of the Image Comics line is actually 10 years old. That's the revelation from creator Todd McFarlane, who has left *Spider-Man* for this slightly different superhero.

"He has been sitting in my portfolio for 10 years. I never pulled him out because of the comics system at the time. Now, I've dusted him off," says McFarlane, who feels the time is right for creator-owned properties. "I have *10* new characters. *Spawn* might not even be the best, but he happens to be the first!"

Image Comics, being published by Malibu Group, made headlines for its blaze of hot young creators, who have left the major companies behind to establish their own titles under the Image imprint. *Spawn* follows Rob Liefeld's record-setting *Youngblood* (CS #25) in the new line of creator-owned comics.

"One of the things I wanted to play with is that, for all intents and purposes, *Spawn* is the strongest guy in our new universe. But, he doesn't use his powers," McFarlane says. "I always hated that Superman could just sort of juggle planets. Batman never really did that much for me, because I never believed a guy could dodge bullets like that.

"Some people have called Spawn a cross between Spider-Man and Batman, but he's really more of a cross between Batman and Superman! He has the power, but he doesn't use it, because he has only a finite amount. If I gave you 20 bucks and said, 'When you've spent the 20 bucks, we're coming to kill you,' you probably wouldn't spend it real fast!

"That's what this guy's all about—he has a *finite* amount of power. Every time he uses any, he comes closer to death, so he's frugal with his power! He might use no powers in one issue, and in the next, he may have to topple a building, using up 15 percent of his power. He has to be selective.

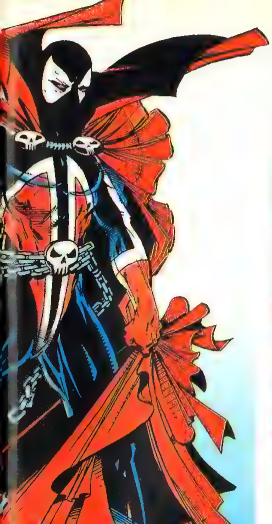
"In essence, I can do a Batman story, and when I get bored, I can have Spawn stop an alien invasion, because he's the strongest man in the world. I can have my cake and eat it too with this guy. There are advantages to being the boss!"

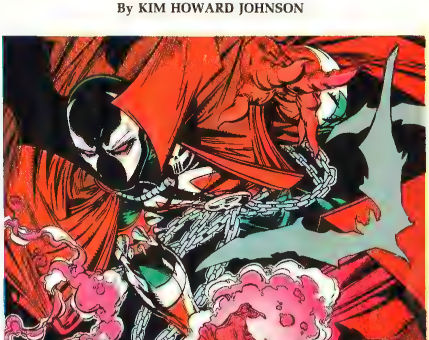
Unlike most other Image books, which will feature high-powered superhero action, *Spawn* concentrates more on urban heroics, less on supervillains. Spawn stories will be closer to Batman and Daredevil tales, though the hero has the capability to boost his power to super-levels to fit potential crossovers with other Image characters.

"I never did like *World's Finest*. If

Todd McFarlane created him, but he isn't revealing any answers yet.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON





All Spawn Art: Todd McFarlane/Courtesy Image/Malibu Graphics

Ready to strengthen Malibu's new Image is Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*.

Superman can't take care of it, I don't see where Batman's really going to save him too often!" McFarlane quips. "Those stories never really did much for me. So, we'll keep *Spawn* urban, but if he does have to go into battle with the equivalent of Superman, then he can 'up' himself to the situation, something Batman could never do."

McFarlane will be taking his time revealing Spawn's origin. "I'm not just going to throw out his origin," the artist says. "I'm going to play it slow and trickle it out."

However, he will say, that the man who becomes *Spawn* actually died five years ago, in 1987, and makes a pact with the Devil that allows him to come back.

"He figures he'll come back 10 seconds after he died. Unfortunately, the Devil, or whoever you want to call him—I don't give him a name—zips him to 1992! His whole life has changed. The reason he came back was to see his wife again," says the happily-married McFarlane, who recently became a father. "If I dropped dead and somebody told me I could spend five more minutes with my wife for my soul, I would give it to them. That's what this guy's like.

"So, he comes back out of love. He's one of the few who doesn't come back for revenge! He wants to spend time with his wife, but he finds out that she has remarried, so the whole reason he returned has been taken away. He doesn't want to disrupt her life, so he tries to kill himself, but it's the one thing he *can't* do.

"He was a mercenary before he died, so he has fighting in his blood. He's stuck with these powers, and at the time of his death, he was getting weird. If you want to read a little deeper into this, it's not unlike Todd and his situation with a certain company he just quit," laughs McFarlane, alluding to his departure from Marvel's *Spider-Man*.

"Spawn figures he now has the power—he's not going to go out and be a Punisher. There are already plenty of those guys. Still, if he's cornered, he might pull out a gun. He travels with a gun—he's *not* like Batman, who's dumb enough to go without a gun. If Spawn carries a gun, he may not have to use his powers!

"We don't want to drag out Spawn's origin as long as Wolverine's origin, but on the other hand, too, I don't want to just spoon-feed everything to these kids.

"I tried to do something like that when I did my first five issues of *Spider-Man*, and it backfired on me, because I didn't know what I was doing. I still don't know if I know what I'm doing, but I was so subtle with this voodoo lady that nobody really knew what she was about. Fans would say, 'Wow! Something happened, Todd, but I don't know what it was!' I was always going to bring her back and set her up as this mystery lady, but then I quit."

McFarlane plans to use *Spawn* to investigate serious subjects, like racial attitudes.

"Actually, he was a middle-class black man when he died, and he returns as a white man," McFarlane says. "I grew up with minorities all

Ending "Spider-Man"

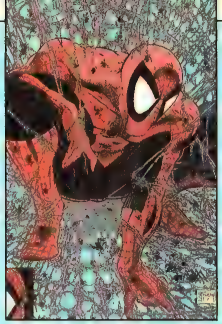
When the first issue of *Spider-Man*, written and drawn by Todd McFarlane, set sales records, many people predicted a long tenure on the title for him.

McFarlane surprised readers by quitting the book after issue #16, claiming he wanted to spend more time with his new baby daughter. Many fans were skeptical, but he maintains that was the *real* reason.

"Ninety percent of it was the baby, and that's the honest-to-God truth! I was at a point in my career where I didn't have to worry about paying the rent, and my wife had always been sweet to me, so this was my way of paying her back," McFarlane says. "I just wanted to spend time with my wife and get to know my baby.

"The other 10 percent was: I had done 40 issues of *Spider-Man* [and *Amazing Spider-Man*] by that point, and in today's market, that's a pretty long run on a character. I don't want to be unduly harsh, but once a book becomes successful, that can almost become detrimental to it. When they give you a dud book, they'll say, 'Do what you can do to perk the sales up,' but once you've gotten it successful, then they feel *they* know what made it successful.

"Suddenly, they wanted to do this and that, and they got a new editor on the book. My attitude has always been 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' But there's a mindset at corporations, and this is what gets me pissed off. I always say if I can turn in 22 blank pages and the kids buy a million copies, who *cares* how comic books have been done for the past 50 years? don't understand that there are two ways to get to the same point, not just one path. I got tired of telling them, 'No, you're not wrong, it's just that there's another way of doing it.' "



Family additions and editorial changes at Marvel prompted Todd McFarlane to say goodbye to *Spider-Man*.

I don't care that there used to be words or pictures—if the kids are buying a million copies, then they're happy. I'm happy and you're selling comic books—that's why you're in business. What's the deal, who cares?

"But it goes beyond that. They'll say, 'We don't care that we're selling a million, we care that we're selling a million and it doesn't look like what it *should* look like.' That's what started to wear me down, that suddenly, they had all the answers again."

McFarlane says that editorial changes at Marvel also contributed to his dissatisfaction. "Every editor has a different way of doing things. Many people take things too personally. If you don't do it their way, they take it as a personal insult, and I fought that from day one on *Spider-Man*. They

Spider-Man (which McFarlane discussed in CS SPECTACULAR #2) marked his first attempts at scripting. He says Marvel never gave him any flak—or advice—about his writing.

"People couldn't divorce Todd McFarlane, the somewhat-experienced illustrator, from Todd McFarlane, the novice writer. I said, 'Guys, you want to tell me something about my writing, I'm all ears! But if you want to re-draw one line of my pencils, then we've got a hassle on our hands.'

"But I was begging for people to help me out on the writing. Nobody came forward to say, 'Todd, this sucks! Why don't you try to do this?' They just stayed away from me. It didn't bother me—I've always had to sink or swim on my own merits, so I just figured out the writing on my own. It doesn't mean it will ever be great, but I put together a decent package, and the whole of my books are better than the parts."

By and large, Todd McFarlane says he was pleased with his work on the *Spider-Man* title, and the readers seemed to agree.

"I got a lot of letters, and the kids that I'm aiming it for really like my stuff," he says. "I'm not aiming it at 35-year-old guys; I'm aiming it at 16-year-olds, and they're happy with the product, so I feel I'm being successful at what I do. Now, if I was trying to do *Sandman*, then I'm not doing what I should be doing, but I'm not trying to do *Sandman*—I'm trying to do *Spider-Man*."

—*Kim Howard Johnson*

Spider-Man Art: Todd McFarlane/Trademark & Copyright 1993 Marvel Entertainment Group

around me, and I saw racism in a subtle vein, so I want to play on built-in prejudices that people don't think they have."

Spawn also deals with another problem less common in the real world. "When he's killed, he's burnt, obliterated, so that when he comes back to life, Spawn looks the way he did when he died. It expends a lot of his energy to turn human, so he won't turn human too many times. When he does, he can only turn into this white guy. He has many powers, but he can't change his appearance, and even though he can put skin on himself and look like a normal human being, if he walks around for three days, it starts to deteriorate. So, for the most part, he looks pretty bad under his costume. He's not all that nice to look at, so he must stay in the shadows."

Photo: By & Copyright 1992 Albert L. Ortega

When Spawn comes to life, he'll truly look like death warmed over.

McFarlane's working style on *Spawn* is geared toward the art. It's a rather unusual approach that has been successful for him in the past.

"I draw a book, and *then* I write it. The pages can switch sometimes. I usually draw about 13 pages, just because I think they're cool. They don't really have anything to do with anything, and they're not planned. Then, I put them down on the floor, and I go, 'OK, now what would be a cool order to put these in?' I'll sit there, and what was going to be pages six and seven, I may throw them in as the first two pages, not really putting in too many word balloons. Chris Claremont wouldn't really be impressed with the way I work, but," McFarlane laughs, "I'm not impressed with the way he draws!"

The Image Comics titles—which also include Erik Larsen's *The Dragon* and Jim Valentino's *The Pact*—will allow for crossovers, although the individual characters are all owned by their specific creators. "If Rob Liefeld calls and says, 'I've got this great idea; I want to use Spawn in my book,' I either say, 'Cool! Here's a piece of paper, go ahead and use him,' or 'Nahhh.' It's basically a buddy-buddy thing."

Spawn's origin will unspool over the first three issues, but the title won't necessarily involve a series of story arcs, as *Spider-Man* did. "It's not even that it will be one continuous story," McFarlane says. "It's just that most of the info on his origin will come out in the first three issues. I don't know if I'll do four or five-part stories, though—I did that on *Spider-Man* just to be rebellious."

Ten years ago, Spawn began as a SF-oriented character. The costume was the same, but now it's blue instead of red.

"I just never felt the impulse to bring him out of the portfolio, because he was *my* character," McFarlane says. "I never minded drawing Superman or Batman, but why would I give away a character that might potentially be big? Chances are he won't, but that's one reason I'm not working for one of the big companies. Even given that it's a one-in-a-million chance, why would I sell that one chance?

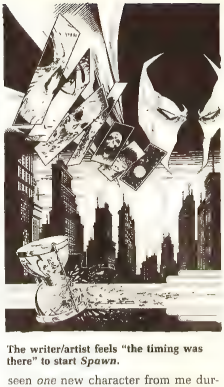
"During my run on *Spider-Man*, I took old characters like Morbius, Hobgoblin and Lizard went with them. Rob Liefeld gave Marvel a dozen characters, but that's because he has a million of them. I'm not quite the fountain of energy that Rob is, but part of it may be that I've stifled that because of my beliefs.

McFarlane describes his hero as "a cross between Batman and Superman."

"Right now, they're saying, 'Ah, he can quit *Spider-Man*, and *Spider Man* will go on forever.' And they're right! But, *somebody* created Spider-Man, and they never seem to acknowledge that. Personally, I can't create something new that might come back to haunt my kids someday."

McFarlane says that for him, money has very little to do with the Image titles.

"It can be said, and it's a viable excuse, that I've hit the peak and get a good paycheck, so it's easy for me to quit. I would have quit three years ago. I'm not quitting on a lark. These are things that have been bothering me for years—because if they weren't, you would have seen new characters from me, and you haven't seen *one* new character from me during my entire career at Marvel or DC. *Spawn* has been around since I started in the business. The timing was there to start this book."



The writer/artist feels "the timing was there" to start *Spawn*.

The most important reason McFarlane became a part of Image Comics was, he says, a moral one. "Personally, it's not owning the character and it's not a money factor, although those are the results of quitting. For me, it's a moral stance against the companies. The system is wrong, and I'm not willing to play within the system anymore. Could I have quit last year? Yes. Could I have quit the year before? Yes. And if I could have helped put together a band of guys like this two years ago, I would have quit then. But, the timing, and the marketplace wasn't there. The marketplace is completely different today than it was even five years ago, so now, if we can get Rob, Jim [Lee], Erik [Larsen] and myself, that makes a difference.

"This isn't why the other guys are coming, but with me, I'm saying the system is wrong and there's only one way to change it. I tried to kick and scream from the inside, but you have to change it from the outside. Quitting one at a time doesn't work. Neal Adams and Jack Kirby quit one at a time, and they replaced those guys, but if Neal, Jack, Gil Kane, John Buscema, Jim Starlin and Don Heck had *all* quit at the *exact* same time and started their own company, they probably would have been somewhat successful. Quitting one at a time, we're too easily replaced. This is the

(continued on page 60)

ARTISTIC GIANT

Neal Adams reviews a legendary comics past & previews his future Continuity.

By DREW BITTNER

One can refer to him in many ways, but please, *don't* call Neal Adams a legend. "I was at a convention in New York, at a panel discussion they called 'Legends of Comics,' and I was up on stage with a lot of grey-haired guys," Adams remembers. "I didn't feel like a legend, not because I don't think I've done good work, but I think people expect me to draw Batman, and that's *not* where I'm at."

The label, as well as the Batman association, may be unavoidable. Legions of Batman fans remember Adams' ground-breaking work on the Dark Knight, restoring mystery and grim authority to the character. And those readers will be glad to hear that Adams *may* draw another Batman story in the future, although it won't be the project DC had been discussing last year.

"We had the project lined up, but it didn't work out," Adams says. "They have an artist, Michael Nasser, who's working on it now. He draws very much in my style and it should be a good book. I'm open to doing a Batman book now—it's up to DC.

"Enough time has gone by that I can *really* play with Batman again. People can see what I would have

Continuity Comics publisher and artist Neal Adams is "open" to working on a new Batman project one day.

Photos: By & Copyright M. Labelle-Courtesy Continuity

done with Batman, given the right technology."

Adams is keenly aware that others have taken up the mantle he wore in the 1970s and notes that the competition for being the best Batman artist became serious in recent years.

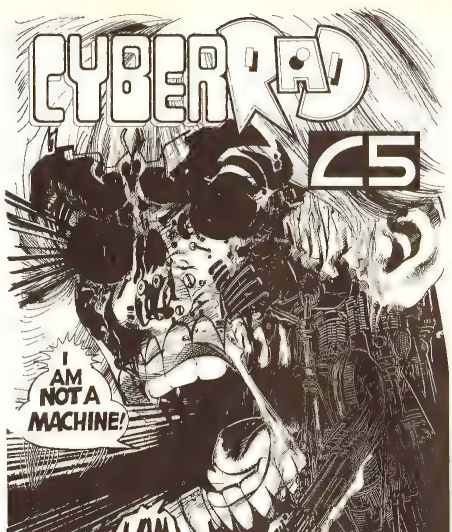
"There's Frank Miller and all the others who've done Batman," Adams says. "If I were to do the *best* Batman now, it would have to be some awfully good Batman. I would have to pull out all the stops to succeed, and even then, it might not be the best."

There are three reasons Adams would do a Batman tale. "First is that since we're publishing [at Continuity], I want to get the name out there a bit more, and I think this would do it," Adams admits. "Second is that I made so little money with DC and Marvel back in those days, I would like to make a dollar. And third is that so many people ask me, 'When are you going to do another Batman story?' That happens almost every day. For the sake of the fans, I would do one."

Despite the critical acclaim of his '60s Batman stories, Adams is modest about his contribution to DC's most popular character.

"I didn't really do anything with Batman," Adams says. "I was lucky to bring him back to the way he was when Bob Kane created him. I took a character who was walking around in broad daylight in long underwear and made him into somebody who snuck around at night and looked like a bat. Any kid could tell you that's what Batman is.

"Batman was 'retarded' enough [as a character] that it worked," he comments. "I don't think Green Lantern was when drawn by Gil Kane. Green Lantern was a pretty good character, certainly well-drawn; I just made him a little more human."



Art: Neal Adams.

***CyberRad* is Adams' attempt "to do an American/Japanese kind of comic."**

His *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* stories with Denny O'Neil are considered milestones in presenting social issues to the comics-reading audience. Adams never thought of those stories as particularly controversial until the now-famous drug story involving Green Arrow's young sidekick, Speedy.

"I went home and decided I *really* wanted to do the drug story," the artist recalls, "so I pencilled and inked the cover, and it's exactly as you've seen it, with Speedy and his works on the table. I took it into [editor] Julie Schwartz's office, put it on his desk, and he dropped it like a hot potato.

"He was very clear that if we did the story, we would have to make Speedy into a heroin junkie. Not a pot smoker, not a pill popper like they did at Marvel; he would have to be a hard drug user. It was an interesting situation. Denny wanted to write the story, I wanted to draw it, Julie came around after he had calmed himself down. And then, Stan Lee did his Spider-Man story..."

Within a few weeks, remembers Adams, while DC staffers debated the prospects of doing the drug story, Lee got the jump on them by publishing a drug abuse story in *Spider-Man* #96-98 (illustrated by Gil Kane) that was a first; originally rejected by the Comics Code Authority, Marvel published the story anyway without the seal of approval.

"We could have done it first and been the ones to make a big move. Popping a pill and walking off a roof isn't the sort of thing that really happens, but heroin addiction is; to have it happen to one of *our* heroes was potentially devastating. Anyway, the publishers at DC, Marvel and the rest called a meeting, and in three weeks, the Comics Code was completely rewritten. And we did our story."

Green Lantern didn't start out being a "socially motivated" book. It was on the verge of cancellation; Gil Kane had stepped down as artist, and Adams asked if he could do the last few issues.

"Julie said fine, and here was Denny O'Neil," Adams says. "In those days, if anyone could be considered a radical, it was Denny. It was the '60s and we were feeling pretty randy. Nothing was really going on at DC and nobody was paying attention to the book, so we thought it would be fun to play with the problems of our day."

Being progressive has left Adams with a reputation he would rather not have, however. "I *don't* like the idea of being a revolutionary," he says. "It bothers me to attract all that attention: it's tough, because people thought of it as *the* best stuff, and it *wasn't*. When I got into comic books, nothing was what I wanted it to be. I couldn't make them the way I wanted, because it was like stepping back into the Stone Age. All these surprises I supposedly sprung on people, they existed in the world of illustration for *years*. I just made use of them. It was like going into a primitive village and lighting a cigarette. To you, it's just a cigarette, but to them, it's some big mystical thing.

"People seem to think I'm a rabble rouser and have many opinions, but the truth is I *don't* have many opinions. I only have opinions when it's clear to me that something is wrong and something definitely ought to be done about it. I'm more willing to do something about it. I would rather be down in the trenches, competing with people doing excellent work," says Adams. "If something's excellent, I want it to stand out from an excellent field of work. I don't want to be the only pig in the pigpen. The competition is much better now."

Adams' career has been a series of challenges met and overcome. The first was deciding on a career in comics.

"I got started in 1959," Adams recalls, "and in '59, *nobody* was getting into comics. I went to the School of Arts and Design, and to the best of my knowledge, not only was nobody getting into comics, but nobody was teaching that comics was an industry with a future. Anybody involved with comics was wasting his time, because of the Wertham investigation and the creation of the Comics Code. Being involved with comics was anathema."

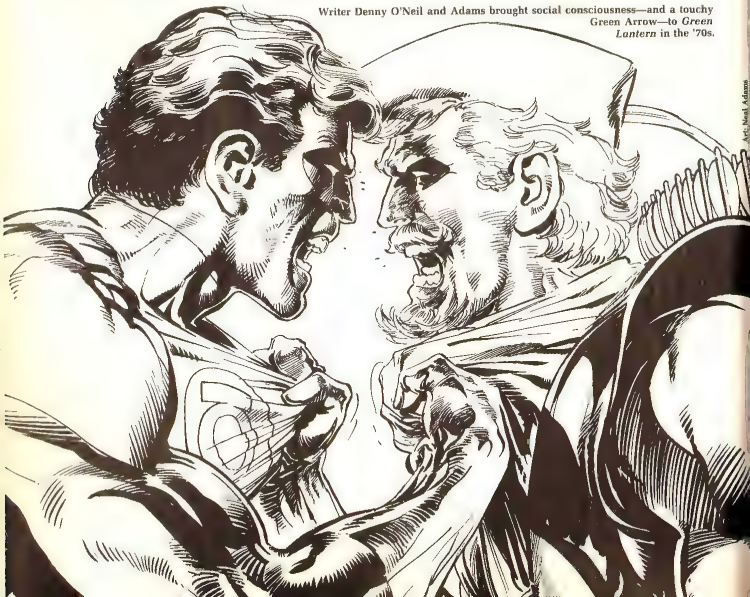
Adams was "a minority of one."

To back up his claim, he notes, "With the exception of a few writers who got into the field after doing something else, there is nobody in comic books who is within five years of my age. It's true Roy Thomas got in after he had been teaching, and Archie Goodwin might be within that same time, but he's a writer and got in later. Jim Steranko might be around my age, but he was a magician and did other things before comics."

At the time, the giant of the industry was DC Comics. "I tried to get work at DC, which was really the *only* comic book company around," he says. "Timely, which became Marvel, was around too, but you hardly considered it a comic book company; DC was the place to go. The work I presented was very professional; by the time I graduated high school, my work was quite good, but they simply weren't hiring. Some old guy came out, looked at my work and criticized it, but he had that air of pity of a person who knows there's no future in it and I was barking up the wrong tree. The other company doing work then was Archie Comics."

But while Adams found a position at Archie, he never got the opportunity to work on what interested him the most—*The Fly* and their other su-

Writer Denny O'Neil and Adams brought social consciousness—and a touchy Green Arrow—to *Green Lantern* in the '70s.



Art: Neal Adams

perhero titles published at the time.

"While I was in their office, they had me call Joe Simon, and Joe, in a very fatherly way, advised me that he thought my work was good and could be professional. As a young illustrator, I should be pursuing other careers, so he would do me the favor of not hiring me. That was *not* what I wanted to hear.

"In recent years, I've given Joe advice on his rights to characters he created. It was a pleasure to return the favor," Adams admits. "I did it because I was grateful I got out of the comic book field then."

After leaving Archie Comics, Adams went into advertising illustrations and quickly found himself doing a newspaper strip adaptation of the *Ben Casey* TV series.

"It was a very successful comic strip," he remembers. "I got a lot of attention. It was a pretty neat deal. But the end, the death of realistic comics was in the air. I could see it coming and I volunteered to end the strip, even though it was successful. It was in 275 papers and we never lost one—well, we did lose three when I introduced a black character."

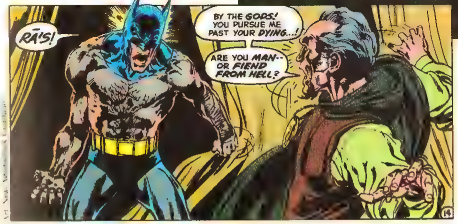
Another try at advertising ended when his portfolio was stolen. Leading Adams to DC Comics, where he worked on the war titles along with veterans like Russ Heath and Joe Kubert (CS #11). However, his big break came soon after superheroes appeared at Marvel.

"DC was starting to feel some competition," Adams says. "Carmine Infantino pulled me into a whole bunch of projects, hoping I could stem the tide. Overall, it was a waste of time. What DC needed to do was change their policies, and they didn't, which allowed Marvel to sweep to the number-one spot."

Adams went to Marvel sometime later. "I guess they thought I brought a bomb or something," he says, "because I did so much work for DC.

Art: Neal Adams

Adams' design for Robin's new costume gave fans a Boy Wonder for the '90s.



Art: Neal Adams/Dick Giordano

Batman's "retarded" character made it easy for Adams to return him "to the way he was when Bob Kane created him."

They offered me any book I wanted to do, so I asked Stan Lee, 'What's your *worst*-selling title?' He said, 'Our worst is *The X-Men*, but we're going to cancel it in a couple of issues.' So, I said that's what I wanted to do. When I came aboard, well, the stories were going nowhere. Roy was the editor, but I don't think he was getting what he wanted.

"On *X-Men*, Roy would plot, or he would let me plot, and then do the dialogue. So, I saw the story with this

Green Arrow, Character Art: Trademark & Copyright 1971, 1972, 1983, 1990, 1991, 1992 DC Comics Inc.

pharaoh guy and said, 'Let me play with it.' And so, we did the Living Pharaoh, we re-introduced the Sentinels, there was Sauron and Magneto with his helmet off and having a personality. There was the land that time forgot under the Earth [the Savage Land]...then the series ended. They said sales hadn't gone up; but they found out, six months after cancelling it, that sales *had* gone up. They didn't know it until too late.

"So, every artist who came into Marvel after that said they wanted to do the *X-Men*, and they ran through the same cycle of villains—Sauron, Magneto, Sentinels, Savage Land. Dave Cockrum and John Byrne did that; they wanted to mess with all that stuff, and then after that, they went off in their own directions."

The Deadman series running in *Strange Adventures* was one the artist had left unfinished upon his departure from DC, and Adams asserts that nobody has done the character correctly since.

"When I started to write Deadman, taking it over from Jack Miller, it started as a passionate book and became *more* passionate. When I finished, there were untold stories left that haven't been done by *anybody* who has played with Deadman since then. The reason those other attempts don't come off is because the book was heading in a certain direction, and that has become skewed. I don't think anybody knows the character as well as I do."

As influential as his work on Batman, the X-Men and Deadman has been on others, Adams confesses that he has been influenced by few comics artists.

Armor beats up bad guys "because he's an angry, frustrated person."

Art: Neal Adams

"It's fairly clear" that Ms. Mystic is more than a witch, reveals her creator.

Art: Neal Adams

"Historically, I have trouble finding people who draw well enough to be an influence. I wasn't influenced by Jack Kirby when I was growing up," he observes. "Although it looked interesting, Kirby's work looked ugly to me. Later, I began to appreciate it from a storytelling point-of-view. For major influences, I would have to say Stan Drake, who did the newspaper strip, *The Heart of Juliet Jones*. He had a tremendous influence not only on myself, but on nearly every other artist around."

Diehard comics fans might never imagine that one of Adams' biggest influences was Norman Rockwell, whom he describes as "the consummate artist of the first half of the 20th century.

"Outside of the fact that he was a tremendously skilled artist and illustrator, Rockwell perhaps recorded more about America in those 50 years than any similar artist, and he has left behind a legacy of history as his work," Adams notes.

Using Rockwell as an example, Adams says a sense of humor in an artist's work is vitally important, and the lack of one is a problem he finds with some contemporary artists.

"I got into a discussion with Will Eisner, who will tell you that anyone not trained in doing 'bigfoot' art or cartoon/humor art is not going to become an incredibly good artist. That's because doing the cartoon work causes a person to understand the point at which a thing is funny or interesting," Adams explains. "There are many realistic illustrators out there who never do cartooning, and their stuff is just *awful* to look at.

"Those guys fill in, doing 10 issues of something, and people read the filler issues hoping a good artist like Art Adams will show up. I'm not saying these people are bad artists, but the problem is that they're too into the superhero genre to recognize the human quality of it. If they don't do that, they miss a lot."

ON THE STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA A GOOD BLACK MAN DIES...AND IN LOS ANGELES, A GOOD WHITE MAN FELL.
SOMETHING IS WRONG! SOMETHING IS KILLING US ALL. SOME HIDEOUS MORAL CANCER IS ROTTING OUR VERY SOULS!

Art: Neal Adams.

"We thought [*Green Lantern/Green Arrow*] would be fun to play with the problems of our day," Adams admits.

However, Adams is quick to point out that modern artists seem much more educated and alert to possibilities than the longtime industry veterans, though all have benefitted from the recent acceptance of comics into the mainstream media. His personal favorites among younger artists include Jim Lee, Todd McFarlane, Bill Sienkiewicz, Mike Mignola, Jose Garcia-Lopez, Michael Golden, Larry Stroman, Jon Bogdanove and Mark Beachum.

Continuity, Adams' own comics company, is taking the lion's share of the artist's energy these days. Generated from the idea of selling projects abroad, paid for with money from his own studio, Continuity went from an attempt to publish a magazine to become an entire line of comics.

Bucky O'Hare: Michael Golden

***Bucky O'Hare* continues to roam throughout the Continuity Universe.**

Starting out, Adams bought various projects, including *Cody Starbuck* by Howard Chaykin, *Bucky O'Hare* by Larry Hama and Michael Golden, *The Freak Show* by Bruce Jones and Bernie Wrightson, and Ed Davis' *Riders to the Galaxy's End*.

"I'm forgetting all my projects," Adams says, "but I sold some of those overseas, brought them back to America and sold some to DC, Marvel and *Heavy Metal*. Some properties weren't as easy to sell. I could sit back and take my losses or—why not publish? So, we publish comics."

Continuity has not gone the route of some independent publishers; Adams' company publishes superhero books first and foremost, using characters mostly created by Adams.

Although recalled for now, *Toyboy* will return soon, Adams promises.

Art: Neal Adams

"Ms. Mystic claims to be a witch, but it's fairly clear that she *has* to be something else," he says. "She cares about the planet from a standing-aside point-of-view. If there was a nuclear power plant disaster, she would destroy the plant, ignoring the people left without power."

Megalith, according to Adams, is an example of someone who "can be intelligent and physically capable at the same time. Geniuses are not always people who have weak bodies and strong minds; they can be any sort of person. Megalith is who Superman should be, but cannot be, because he's an alien; Megalith is an idea you can strive for and still have emotional weaknesses, yet become a better person. Megalith is a super-*man*; Superman is a super-*alien*. He's similar to Doc Savage; Doc has one aspect that diverges definitely from Megalith, and that's the concept of genetically changing a person's physicality. Here's a thing Megalith can't touch, because he's an accident of genetics, but he's accomplished much in his life without the advantage of genetic planning."

Despite all their training and weaponry coming from aliens, Adams says *Armor*, featuring superheroes Armor and Silver Streak, is designed to appeal to martial arts/ninja enthusiasts. And because Armor always seeks to perfect himself, the question becomes: Once you achieve self-perfection, what do you do next?

"Silver Streak would be just as happy to relax at home, while Armor wants to become a superhero and beat up on criminals because he's a frustrated, angry person. It's interesting, to me, that Silver Streak is the more powerful person, but remains in the background because of Armor's stronger personality."

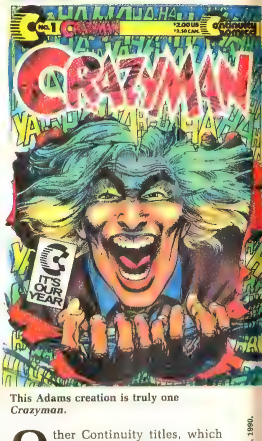
Continuity recently made a splash with *CyberRad* (graced with a hologram cover). "*CyberRad* is an attempt to do an American/Japanese kind of comic, instead of a Japanese/Japanese comic," Adams explains. "There's a whole different kind of storytelling the Japanese are doing. We saw it first in *Akira*. They have some things to show us; not that we should all switch over, but it may be something we can learn from."

Bucky O'Hare, now also a regular Continuity comic that's currently pencilled by artist Andre Coates, has spawned a syndicated animated series and a toy line. Other Continuity titles run the gamut of superheroics from *Crazyman* to *Hybrids*. The Continuity line has employed such veteran talents as Dan Barry, Stan Drake, Rudy Nebres, Larry Stroman, Elliot Maggin and Rick Budder, as well as many promising newcomers.

Art: Michael Netzer/Rudy Nebres

Megalith is "an idea you can strive for and still have emotional weaknesses, yet become a better person," says Adams.

Art: Neal Adams



This Adams creation is truly one *Crazyman*.

Other Continuity titles, which had been temporarily discontinued, will be revived in coming months after some retooling. *Toyboy* and *Earth 4* will return with creative changes.

"*Toyboy* was a great book, but not a top-seller," Adams admits. "The book had fans and everyone wanted to work on it—and it'll come back in some form. With *Earth 4*, we have a new artist, Walter McDaniels, who's young and dynamic—his stuff is *really* fun to look at. I think it was a matter of finding an artist to match the material. Walter is the right artist."

Of his new series, *Hybrids*, *Crazyman* and *Shaman*, Adams offers thumbnail sketches of each title. *Hybrids* follows the adventures of seven half-alien teenagers, each bio-engineered from the cells of a psychic adult donor on Earth. "After all this time, they choose to come home," Adams says. "It's the one thing they all have to hold onto. They have many preconceived notions about what Earth's like, which leads to problems and fights, naturally. They develop relationships with the former kids who donated cells to grow them. And we also learn they aren't the *only* Hybrids running around on Earth.

"Crazyman is exactly that—he's actually loopy. There's no explaining it other than that. He has no powers or special abilities; he's just unbalanced. [*Crazyman* "hero"] Danny Brody's body chemistry isn't

(continued on page 58)

All CyberRad, Intruder, Ms. Mystic, Armor, Bucky O'Hare, Toyboy, Crazyman & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1988, 1989, 1990, Continuity Associates.

UNHAPPY WANDERER

By DREW BITTNER

Jack Monroe is a man who's out of his time, out of his place—and out of patience," says Fabian Nicieza, describing *Nomad*, the protagonist of his new monthly series from Marvel Comics. "He wanders from town to town; sometimes trouble finds him, and sometimes he finds trouble. His motivation is very uncertain. He doesn't even know what it is, beyond survival. He doesn't like what this country has become, and doesn't much like what it was to begin with."

Nomad follows Monroe's travels down the West Coast, across the Southwest and South, and then up the East Coast, a journey that will fill the series' first two years. "His path's ill-defined, but he ends up in Washington D.C. at the second year's end," Nicieza reveals. "He's going to have a lot going on in the meantime."

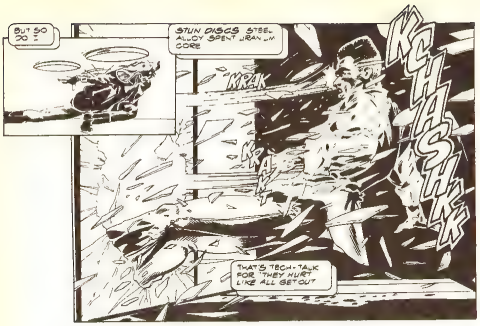
Although out of circulation until recently, Nomad has been hanging about the Marvel Universe for decades. He began his career as a sidekick named Bucky, alongside the 1950s Captain America on his anti-Communist crusades. Both he and the ersatz Cap were enhanced perfect fighting machines; however, the process dangerously destabilized Monroe and the second Cap mentally. The government captured and placed them into suspended animation, to be released in recent years. Monroe took up the Nomad identity that Steve Rogers, the original Captain America, had created, used and discarded, bringing a savagery to crimefighting that Cap discouraged, but couldn't stop. While traveling the country, Nicieza says, Nomad's trying to rediscover himself, but he won't be suffering from culture shock.

"I'm really trying to avoid doing the whole suspended animation bit, mostly since it's *not* appropriate to the stories I'm telling now." Nicieza says. "It was done in *Captain America*. Cap's sense of wanderlust had been covered in the 1960s and '70s. When Roger Stern and John Byrne did their run on that book, they did everything to set him up in the '80s and '90s. Nomad is not and cannot be Cap, which is a big part of his problem. He's just not as good—morally, or as a fighter. Jack Monroe can't be Cap.

"Every time he tries to figure things out, something crashes down to shatter another ideal he might have held onto," Nicieza explains. "He goes through one shattering failure and disappointment after another, continual frustration. If we took this to its logical conclusion, he would jump off a building, but that's not his way. He keeps moving on. Of all the superheroes in the Marvel Universe, I would say Nomad's most in need of a good psychoanalyst."

All Nomad Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

Writer Fabian Nicieza dispatches Nomad on the great American tour.



Nomad won't always solve his problems so quickly, warns writer Fabian Nicieza.

As he travels, Nomad finds plenty of friends and enemies. His constant companion and "reason for living," according to Nicieza, is Bucky. She's a "crack baby" Monroe took from her mother, an addicted prostitute, at the end of his 1991 mini-series.

"This may be the only series you'll ever see where the lead character stops in issue #1 to buy diapers," Nicieza notes. "He's not a qualified parent; he has literally nothing but love to give this baby. One running gag is that he still doesn't know how to diaper Bucky—he keeps putting them on backwards. I guess *Raising Arizona* was a subtle background influence; *Lone Wolf and Cub* obviously made an impression on me."

Bucky is Nomad's reason for forging ahead through his difficulties. "It's like a homeless person with a pet," he says. "Just knowing he's responsible for Bucky forces Nomad to survive, when he might not try for his own sake. He takes jobs he wouldn't want just to put food in the kid's mouth. He's so protective that he stops carrying loaded guns around Bucky; he doesn't want to kill anyone anymore. This attitude gets him into trouble at times."

Although taking care of Bucky occupies most of his time, Monroe won't lack for adventure. Issue #2 (out this month) pits him against a band of slaughter-hungry maniacs called the Roadkill Club in a small town dubbed "the Roadkill Capital of the U.S." by a *Spy* style magazine.

"These guys are serious about holding that rather sick honor," Nicieza observes, "so Nomad joins forces with an animal-rights group to put things right. He comes up with a unique and fairly elegant solution to this situation."

Then, Nomad lands in Los Angeles, where he finds what becomes his cross-country support group, the Undergrounders.

"They're people who live on the fringe," Nicieza says. "Con artists, petty crooks, thieves, prostitutes, scam artists—people who band together to get through the day. The Undergrounders are Nomad's supporting cast in the major cities, providing him with numbers to call to hook up with the underground. All he has to do is dial a number to find help. Whether he works for them, helping or being helped, they're the best kind of supporting cast for a guy whose job is wandering. Many Undergrounders will be ongoing characters in the book. I want a supporting cast, but it's difficult to maintain supporting characters in a book like this one. I'm trying to juggle things to make it work out."

The Undergrounders, and the world they live in, will be revealed as the series continues.

"They live in their own world, parallel to ours but apart," Nicieza says. "These people—I don't want to call them 'low-lifes,' but they're certainly on society's fringes—exist with their own means of communication, their own language, their own ways of surviving. I don't think this will put off readers if I introduce it gradually."

Equally shadowy and mysterious

The Favor Banker is the "puppeteer" pulling Jack Monroe's strings in *Nomad*.

All Nomad Art © Clarke Hankins/Mark McKenna

Government agent Gyrich is using Monroe's past to put a stop to his future.

is the Favor Banker, an enigmatic know-it-all who will be "the puppeteer pulling Jack's strings, until he learns what's going on and starts cutting himself loose," Nicieza states.

Dr. Andie Sterman and SHIELD agent Jack Norriss (both from the limited series) and a U.S. senator who knew Jack Monroe as a kid in the '50s will round out Nomad's supporting cast, but "whether they're on his side or against him is subject to daily reinterpretation," Nicieza says.

U.S. Agent will appear, crossing over from his stints in *Captain America* and *West Coast Avengers*, to bring Nomad to justice. "U.S. Agent catches up to him and they have a good to-do," Nicieza says. "Nomad is offered amnesty by the government for the thefts, murders and mayhem that occurred in his limited series."

This arrangement leads into a nine-part triple crossover involving the Punisher and Daredevil, where all three heroes end up in Las Vegas. There, a major meeting of top crime bosses seeks to divide the deposed Kingpin's empire.

"The crossover's called 'Dead Man's Hands.' It has good interaction for these three, and they get to swap situations a bit: Nomad fights [Daredevil enemy] Bushwhacker and X-Force bad guy Deadpool, while the Punisher gets Bucky for an issue."

Beyond the crossover, Nomad fights an *Infinity Wars* doppelganger of Gambit from the *X-Men* in a story Nicieza calls "very *Die Hard*-ish. The doppelganger basically takes over LAX [airport] just as Nomad gets back from Las Vegas. This is a real different *Nomad* story, because getting involved with cosmic storylines is not his thing. But they told me I *had* to write a *Nomad* tie-in issue."

After Nomad leaves Los Angeles, a parting Nicieza describes as "unwanted," he encounters Red Wolf, then stalks a murderer who preys on transvestites. Nomad undergoes some unique ordeals in solving this crime.

"You can be sure he'll end up wearing high heels and a pink dress," Nicieza promises. "These aren't the same kind of stories I can do in mainstream books. If I did this story in *New Warriors*, the cross-dressing would have to be in the background. Here, it can take center stage.

"We can do very small and personal stories in this book. I have what's tentatively a two-part AIDS story called 'Hidden in View,' about whether or not Bucky has AIDS. She's a crack baby, so she could have gotten it from her mother."

Nicieza explains that Nomad's questions about the modern world arise from questions he has been grappling with for years. "I look inwards," he reveals. "This book is about me and my own questions.

Bucky is Nomad's "reason for living," Nicieza notes, even if she does pose a problem for him during fights.

When trouble doesn't find Nomad, "*he* finds trouble," says the writer.

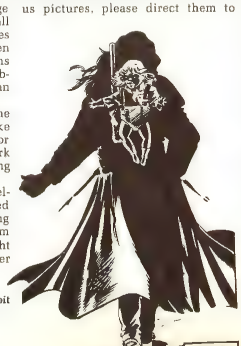
things I see going on in this country. It's partly the character and situations he might find himself in, but much of the attitude is my own. 'Complain about everything, have answers for nothing' is really *me*."

He adds that *Nomad* is enjoyable precisely because Jack isn't heroic. "Having a character as uncertain and unheroic as Nomad is refreshing," Nicieza says. "He can be used, mistreated and manipulated, his ideals betrayed... He has a lot of baggage from the last few years, but they're all empty bags; I can fill those suitcases with anything I want. He hasn't been completely defined. Nomad learns about society by encountering and absorbing it. He's a blank slate that I can scribble all over."

Nicieza is enthusiastic about the work of his artist, S. Clarke Hawbaker, who will pencil eight or nine issues per year, with Mark McKenna inking, Joe Rosas coloring and Chris Eliopoulos lettering.

"Clarke and Mark's work is excellent," Nicieza says. "Clarke captured this character from the beginning exactly as I've been visualizing him for the past five years. That's no slight to James Fry or any of the other artists I've worked with, but it's the first time Nomad was drawn as I've seen him. Clarke has this photo-realistic style that works well here. It's very impressive and striking."

Nicieza says he has passed along as much visual reference as possible to Hawbaker, but adds that COMICS SCENE readers can help by mailing in pictures of their city. "Anybody from Phoenix, Albuquerque, Dallas, Miami or New Orleans who wants to send us pictures, please direct them to Marvel [387 Park Avenue South, NY, NY 10016]. On *Alpha Flight*, Canadian readers sent us things because they wanted Canada to be shown right. Anything from these cities would be great! And everybody else out there, he's crossing the country in a big U-shape, final stop Washington D.C. Anyone who would like to contribute, we would be *glad* for the help."



With Bucky in tow, Monroe is "a little bit *The Fugitive*, a little Andrew Vachss, a little *New York Post*," says Nicieza.

Because Hawbaker's art is painstaking, Nicieza expects to have a list of semi-permanent fill-in artists handling issues Hawbaker can't pencil. Javier Saltares is drawing the transvestite story, for instance.

"We'll have Clarke do as many as he can, but it won't be more than nine per year," Nicieza says. "As long as the readers know that in advance, that we'll have other artists set to do Clarke's off-issues, I don't think there'll be any problem."

The artists will have plenty of time to concentrate on *Nomad*, as Nicieza intends to have few superheroes make guest appearances, after those initial crossovers.

"I don't see many stories coming up that need it," he says. "U.S. Agent, Punisher, Daredevil and Red Wolf are about it for a long while. Cap won't show up, mostly because I want to distance Nomad from Captain America some. I want to show this guy standing on his own two feet, and I dislike having gratuitous appearances in my books. I don't want this book to become a 'guest star of the month' thing."

Nomad is not what Nicieza considers a "vigilante comic." "They're more visceral and direct about problems; vigilante comics are the solution when the country wants a quick fix and a fast answer," he says. "Why are those kinds of movies so popular? Maybe because everything has to be fast, immediate and obvious. Vigilante characters provide that. In *Nomad*, if people are expecting another *Punisher*-type shoot-'em-up, they'll be disappointed; that's *not* what the book's about. There's lots of action, intrigue, double-crossing and interesting characters, but it's not about people shooting at each other."

In drawing comparisons between Nomad and other people, real and fictional, Nicieza says that despite Marvel publicity assertions to the contrary, Jack Monroe has little in common with another famous wanderer: Beat poet Jack Kerouac.

"Jack Monroe *isn't* the Kerouac of this or any other generation, but there's not that much I can really compare him to," the writer admits. "He's a little bit *The Fugitive*, a little [lawyer/crime writer] Andrew Vachss, a little *New York Post*."

(continued on page 60)

CREATOR'S VIEW

As "Batman Returns," Bob Kane studies the legend he began over a half-century ago.

By **BILL WARREN**

"Well," says Bob Kane, in a voice that still bears traces of the 1930s Bronx, "from what I've seen, *Batman Returns* looks like it could be another blockbuster, if only because some of the sets are like [those from movies by] Cecil B. DeMille or D.W. Griffith. Wayne Manor has what must be 500-foot-high ceilings—it's unbelievable. It's like a set that Griffith would have built for Babylon in *Intolerance*. They must have spent an awful lot of money on this one."

The money, of course, wouldn't have been spent without the gigantic success of *Batman* in 1989—and *that*, needless to say (but we'll say it anyway), would not have been made without Bob Kane. In the late 1930s, inspired by the success of Superman, comics editor Vince Sullivan asked teenaged Bob Kane to devise a new superhero. Combining influences from several sources—Zorro, Leonardo da Vinci's flying machine and the movie *The Bat Whispers*—Kane came up with the Bat-Man. After further tinkering and some input from writer Bill Finger, Bruce Wayne's dual identity was born.

Unlike many other creators of the period, Kane was able to cut a deal with the comics publisher (now DC) to have his name appear on *every* Batman story published thereafter, even those on which Kane didn't work at all. Except for a brief period in the 1960s, Kane's name has appeared on every single tale of the Darkknight Detective, a fact potentially suitable for the Guinness Book of World Records. (It's possible that only Walt Disney has had his name on more stories about one character—Mickey Mouse).

All Batman Returns Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1992 DC Comics Inc/Courtesy Warner Bros.

Kane isn't alone in believing that "Batman is probably one of the five most recognizable characters in the world: Superman, Sherlock Holmes, Mickey Mouse, Batman and maybe James Bond." This familiarity has kept Batman alive and before the American public for more than 50 years, appearing in comic books, comic strips, serials, radio shows, TV series—and, now, three feature films.

On a sunny afternoon in January, Kane relaxes in the front room of his Hollywood apartment, where nine big oils of Batman and other Bat-characters are on display and chats about *Batman Returns*, which is still filming as he talks. (He discussed the first Tim Burton Batman movie in CS #6 & #7.)

"Danny DeVito has a big following, and he is a very fine actor, and he looks horrendous in his makeup as the Penguin—you would never know who's under that makeup. And he plays it straight and angry; he's not the clown that Burgess Meredith played on the TV show. He'll be well accepted, because it's a different kind of Penguin.

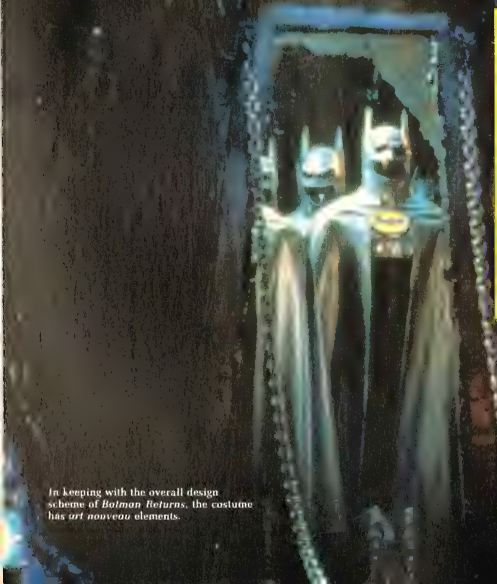
"There was a movie many years ago, a silent movie, *London After Midnight*, with Lon Chaney [Sr.]. He looked somewhat like the Penguin does in *Batman Returns*, a white face with dark circles around the eyes. His hair was straggly, with craggy teeth, and he wore a high hat. I think Danny DeVito is perfectly cast."

Michelle Pfeiffer (STARLOG #94) stepped into the role of Selina Kyle, a.k.a. the Catwoman, when Annette Bening's pregnancy made it impossible for her to play the part. "Michelle Pfeiffer," Kane says, "is sexy and beautiful, and looks very much like a cat. She doesn't look like the TV Catwoman or the one from the comic books. She doesn't have a cape, and she wears a different mask. She has a kind of [illegible] glove, [illegible] it."

(The character somewhat resembles the current comics version of Catwoman.) "Michelle has a stuntwoman who does flips for her, tremendous backward and forward flips like a circus acrobat. She does some stuff herself, and she uses a whip with a lot of dexterity."

The most controversial casting in *Batman* wasn't Jack Nicholson as the Joker, and Kane was happy with the way Nicholson played the role. "I always knew Jack could do it, because he was my *original* choice—I was campaigning for him all along. I couldn't see anyone else.

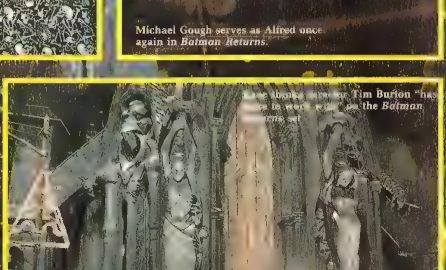
No, the role that had Bat-fans up in arms before the film's release was that of Michael Keaton as Bruce Wayne, the Batman himself. Keaton had been known almost exclusively for comedy roles before that, and because he and director Tim Burton had made *Beetlejuice* together, most were expecting the film to be a wild comedy. But as the world knows now, it was straight even grim, and Burton's decision to cast an Ordinary Joe as Bruce Wayne paid off for almost everyone, including Bob Kane.



In keeping with the overall design scheme of *Batman Returns*, the costume has *art nouveau* elements.

Prominent names in Gotham include businessman Max Shreck (Christopher Walken, center) and the city's mayor (Michael Murphy).

Michael Gough serves as Alfred once again in *Batman Returns*.



Tim Burton "has a great look," says the *Batman Returns* set.

"Michael Keaton was good in the first one," Kane observes, "and I'm sure he'll be fine in this one, too. He fell into the role, and molded it to himself. As Tim Burton said, he wanted a guy who wasn't a super-hunk; a guy who *becomes* a superhero. A superhunk wouldn't even have to wear the costume, but in B. Mr. Ordinary becomes Mr. *Extraordinary*. Burton thought the layman would recognize himself in the role — and it worked. Michael was cool as Bruce Wayne."

One complaint some about the first film, dealt with the costume itself. It was intended to look armored, but it also seemed as if an attempt had been made to sculpt a muscular physique for Keaton out of the costume material. "The costume this time around," Kane points out, "is lighter, not quite contoured like Arnold Schwarzenegger, a little more molded to his body, more supple, so he can move around." In keeping with the overall design scheme of *Batman Returns*, the costume has certain *art nouveau* elements.

The Batmobile is more awesome, says an impressed Kane. "It has more gimmicks. The wheels expand, and they also constrict. In the new movie, it's heading down an alley when it suddenly becomes like a missile, about three feet wide, and it shoots forward down this narrow chasm and comes out the other side. It's a trick Batmobile, and has shields that can come up and cover it, to disguise it. I think the fans will find this Batmobile more exciting." Which, for those who were wowed by the first one, is an impressive prediction.

Kane had been scheduled for a cameo in *Batman*, but when he was in London for six weeks while the film was being shot, the newsroom set, where he was to appear as a newspaper cartoonist, still hadn't been built. He returned to the U.S. and came down with the flu. When the set was finally finished, Kane wasn't exactly inclined to fly back to wintry London for the scene. "So now, the world thinks that bald-headed guy was Bob Kane, because he held up the drawing that says 'Bob Kane' on it. So, I missed my Hitchcockian walk-on."

At the time of this interview, Kane hadn't shot any scenes for *Batman Returns* either, but his wife, actress Elizabeth Sanders, does have a role in the film. She was scheduled to be first rescued, then roughed up by Catwoman, but insurance considerations required a stuntwoman for the role.

"Now, she's in a scene in a mall. The camera comes in for a close-up, and it's very nice. She's in a crowd of Gothamites, all talking about the Penguin, who's now made out like he's a benign humanitarian (at the beginning). There are a few comments before Elizabeth, and then she says, 'Oh, he's just a frog, but he turns into a prince.'"

After the scene was filmed, Kane realized that he would have been perfect as the guy who has the *next* line in the scene, a sarcastic Gothamite who says, "Nahhh, he's just a penguin."

Because Batman with a bow was awesome. Batmobile from Batman Returns.

Pat Hingle reprises as Gotham City Police Commissioner Gordon.

"I could have said that and been up there with my wife, but Tim said I didn't ask him," Kane says with a laugh. "So, that was my cameo—and I missed it again!"

He hasn't visited the *Batman Returns* set as often as fans might suppose. "Often in Hollywood," he says in his careful manner, "the creator is the last guy they want to see on the set. They want to feel it's theirs now, so they'll do it their way. But by being a nice guy, not criticizing anyone, offering my services without being too combustible, I find you can join the team, and they will use you, hey, when they need it. But if you go down and try to tell them what to do, they don't like it at all. I don't go out to the set every day, maybe once a month, so they're glad to see me because I don't overstay my welcome.

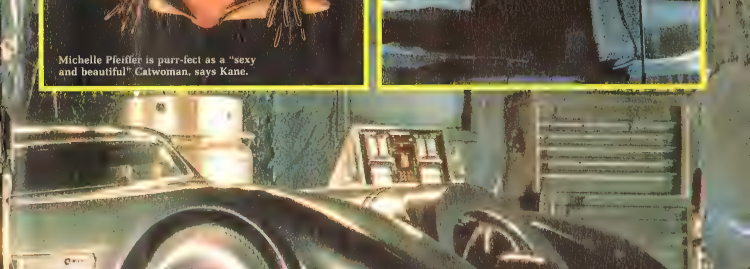
"Shooting a movie is very boring, really. You sit there for three hours while they shoot a three-minute take. For the layman, it's better to watch it in the movie when it's all done. Believe me, it's boring. Interesting, but boring, unless you're personally involved. But hooray for Hollywood."

Kane remains impressed with Tim Burton, and offers some personal commentary on the director. "Oh, he's like me," Kane jokes, "he's a genius. Ha ha. Tim is a very talented guy. Being an animator, he has storyboards made up on every scene, on every shot. Hitchcock also used to do that. So, Tim knows frame to frame exactly where he's going, and he's very visual because of that.

"He also works with a television monitor, so after directing the actors and shooting a take, he can see immediately how the scene looks. He does a

Michelle Pfeiffer is purr-fect as a "sexy and beautiful" Catwoman, says Kane.

Danny De V… is "perfectly… as the Peng… observes K… "You wou… never kno… who's und… that make…



lot of takes, he might do 70 of a one-minute scene. He's a perfectionist, so he'll shoot until he gets the take he wants, then he quits. He's very dedicated and a very hard worker. This film will take about six months to shoot; the one in London was only four-and-a-half months. This one is more convoluted, with more action and more opticals—and the sets are bigger. He has more to work with.

"Tim's kind of an interesting eccentric sort—although I don't know him too well as a person. He's the kind of guy you could talk to for hours and still not know what he's all about. I think Tim is an intrinsically shy person, very closed, and won't open up to a stranger. I went to the premiere of *Edward Scissorhands*; they had a big celebration back at Fox, where they had the sets and food and everything. Tim was only close with his high school friends—he doesn't mix with the celebrities. His hands were waving in the air [as he talked to his friends], he was very loose and animated. He has a lot of genius to him, and he's eccentric. But so was Hitchcock eccentric. I'm eccentric, we're all eccentric."

Gotham undergoes its own elec-

a summary of career, from his aborted days at Disney, where he made *Vincent* and *Frankenweenie* (just out on video) before being laid off. Paul Reubens (Pee-wee Herman) saw some of Burton's work and arranged for him to direct [illegible]. Adventure. "[illegible] with nervousness, and that was a mistake. Though Warner Bros. seemed fantastic to be involved with, I don't know if I had a comic-book sensibility then. I [illegible] that [illegible] guy had the vision to make a movie."

I had read Batman as a kid, [illegible] wrote a script for the film [not] [illegible], and the producers concluded he [might] be able to do it because he was a [illegible] with it. "So they took a chance with him, but they were nervous. I'm was also nervous; we were [illegible]. And it became a hit."

Burton himself feels that "*Batman* is a great look to it; I enjoyed the movie, and thought Nicholson gave a *tour de force* performance. What I liked about it was that it was dark and brooding. I had always feared that it would turn out to be comedic, so as long as it wasn't a comedy I was happy—but really, it was just happy.

And as to why it was a hit, Burton explains, it was because "[illegible] a tendency to go back four or five years to a film, while an adult will go back ten. But with *Batman*, some adults went twice, maybe three times, [illegible] children."

Also, he continues, "the film [illegible] it had been hyped for nine years. The contract was signed in 1980 [illegible] Peters and they brought it to [illegible] when they were working for Polygram. After about 1985, Polygram folded, and they brought it over to Warner Bros. They didn't have the right script, but they had the right director. Then, they had the right script, but they didn't have the right director. Then they didn't have the right actors. It was a potpourri that didn't put together, as a package until '87, so the fans were really hot to get the hit to see *The Batman*. The anticipation was at an all-time high. I had never seen such Bat-mania hit the country with the anticipation of a film before. I think the fans are the ones who typed it. They were waiting with such anticipation that they made the movie a success, and they went back four or five times.

When the *Batman* TV series premiered back in the 1960s, a wave of Bat-mania also swept the country, and this time, Bob Kane was taken unawares. "In the mid-'60s, we didn't know it was just a TV show; we never anticipated it. But from all the observations along the way in 1989—I did a lot of comic book conventions and all—I could see the fans wanted to see *Batman*. The response was so great, letters kept pouring in, and there were newspaper articles and so forth. So, we thought it would be a big hit—but not the monster it became. These things are always a surprise."

[illegible] it was a big hit [illegible] it right. [illegible] was a big hit [illegible] Batman [illegible] the stock [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] goes going up and down [illegible] on top, you feel very regular, very worried, very normal. Because, you look into the world and see the next resurgence. Luckily, Batman had many resurgences. I was also showed on every TV show, in practically every magazine, every place I looked, my face was front and forward."

The movie's success resulted in film studios rushing Bob Kane. "The studio doors were open to me. Do I have another superhero? What else do you have? But if you don't have a character out here, they don't call you. And the phone rang every 60 seconds."

Among the ideas Kane has working now is *Negative Man*, "a television pilot I created of another superhero. I had a man with Fox last year, but they called in a director who didn't know how to use a superhero. They should have leaned on me to at least collaborate with the writer, but it was kind of divide-and-conquer."

Kane has higher hopes right now for another idea, *The Silver Fox*, which he has written and will produce. "I can't give you details, he says, playing his cards close to his vest, "but it's a superhero with a twist. We would produce it independently with financial backing from Europe for $20 mil or so. Elizabeth will have a co-starring role in this one. I'm thinking of Anthony Hopkins as the villain, a master magician. So, there's in the offing right now." Kane also recently produced a well-reviewed theatrical production of Clifford Odets' *The Country Girl*, starring his wife and Stuart Whitman.

"I'm looking forward to the next *Batman*, because I think it will also be revived again." But Bob Kane is ready for it now. "I guess I really retain some humility from growing up in the Bronx as a poor kid. When you achieve fame early in life, when you're years

According to Kane, *Batman Returns* has "more action" than its predecessor.

you're more existential, you take it more seriously. I have had it a few times around, and as you get older you have different values, you know? It's like a metamorphosis. At the beginning was a lot of hedonism—wine, women and song—a lot of travel. You get that out of your system. You get married, you have children—I have a daughter from my first marriage, and now I'm married to a beautiful girl, Elisabeth Sanders, and we've been happy together for 11 years.

So you get older, you think more of good health, and love. Fame is fleeting in general. If you concentrate and live for fame alone, you'll be very empty in the end, because it comes and goes. I know the fame, and I want it, and I'm grateful for it. Youth has frustrations, its price to pay. Philosophically, it's good to have it all: you're young—health, fame, love—but how many people have the whole package? Nobody's young all forever. So, when you ask it what means a lot to me, yes, it means a lot to me when you're older and experience it once again, you take it more in stride. I know to grab it when it comes by, but I know what it feels like. I've been there before."

Kane describes Burton as a "very visual" director. "Tim knows frame to frame exactly where he's going."

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Agents of Oz

By PHILIP AMARA

A cigarette-smoking Scarecrow! Things sure have changed in the magical land of Oz. In *Oz Squad*, published quarterly by Brave New Words, the dimensional doorway between Oz and Earth has been opened, though maybe not for the better. As a result, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Lion, led by a now-adult Dorothy Gale, have banded together to confront the crime and chaos plaguing the two worlds. Now, they're CIA agents.

Oz Squad is the brainchild and comics-writing debut of 29-year-old Steven Ahlquist. The idea was, in large part, a response to the recent revisionist versions of classic comics heroes. "I had read Howard Chaykin's version of *The Shadow* and thought he had stomped all over the original," Ahlquist observes. "When I was reading the Oz books, I thought they could be updated. It sounds silly, but I knew it could be done with *respect* for the original material. Someone can look at it and say, 'This is a ridiculous concept,' but I'm treating it very seriously. I'm not winking, and saying, 'Isn't this funny?' In a sense, what I'm trying to do with *Oz Squad* is parody the idea of updating old characters."

Ahlquist was always an avid fan of the Oz novels, penned in the early 1900s by L. Frank Baum and continued by Ruth Plumly Thompson and other writers. Ahlquist knew the characters were rich enough to take down a road that Baum and company never intended.

"I read the stories when I was young," the young writer says, "and later in the Ballantine/Del Rey editions, I read all 14 books [by Baum]. I was impressed by them, but I felt that there were never-explained things going on behind the scenes. Nick Chopper, who is cut to pieces

Led by Dorothy, they're together again. One lion. One straw. One tin. The Oz Squad.

All Oz Squad Art: By & Copyright 1991 Andrew Murphy & Dan Schaefer

Oz Squad art Courtesy Steve Ahlquist/Brave New Words

"Being sappy and sentimental isn't the right way to approach Oz," says artist Andrew Murphy.

and becomes the Tin Man, doesn't mind that he's all metal. Another character, Ozma, is raised all her life as a little boy and suddenly becomes a girl, and everything is fine. I felt there was more to do here."

Joining Ahlquist is penciller Andrew Murphy, whose past work includes stories for Comico's *Primer*, as well as *Dark Horse Presents*. When Brave New Words approached him with the project, Murphy admits he didn't know quite what to make of it.

"All I could think of were 'The Oz/Wonderland Wars' in *Captain Carrot*," says Murphy. "But as I thought about it, I liked it more and more. There's all this material begging to be turned into a comic book. Steve saw this great potential and grabbed it. There have been other Oz comics, by Eric Shanower and others, but somebody should have modernized them. Being sappy and sentimental *isn't* the right way to approach Oz. You can't pretend you're a kid anymore. All you can do is take what you liked as a child and maybe bring it along in a different form as an adult."

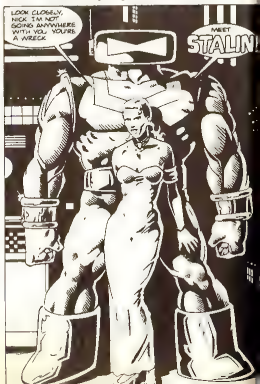
While future stories aren't set in stone, Ahlquist has a fix on the series' future. He's careful about his interpretation of Oz. "I don't take a cut-and-paste approach," says Ahlquist. "I'm taking innocent characters and thrusting them into real-world situations where there are choices to be made. Suddenly, characters that are black-and-white are trying to exist in a world of greys."

Ahlquist has based the history of the *Oz Squad* universe on Baum's first five Oz books, which are in the public domain. He only alludes to the other stories. In the premiere issue, readers are thrown headfirst into the action, unaware of the catastrophic events which occurred in Oz decades before.

Dorothy uses the Gnome King's stolen wish belt (which takes the place of the silver slippers lost in *The Wizard of Oz*) to become an adult. Upon traveling back to Earth, she runs into problems with organized crime. Ozma, the Queen of Oz, sends the Tin Man to rescue Dorothy and bring her back. As a result, Ozma gains a distrust of Earth and cuts Oz off from it. What follows changes Oz forever.

"Around 1943," says Ahlquist, "the Nazis are interested in making a big fantasy film on a par with *The Thief of Baghdad*. Joseph Goebbels, head of the propaganda ministry during World War II, is doing research, and suspects that Oz might not be a fictional place after all. Through sorcery, he finds a way to Oz. The Nazis roll right into Oz, and because the magic used to get to Oz also neutralizes the wish belt's power, they topple it easily. Oz becomes an occupied state during WW II.

"Eventually, Goebbels and his troops are defeated, but Oz realizes it can't keep Earth from coming at them again. Instead of trying to isolate themselves, they try to work with



Rebecca Eastwitch, a.k.a. the Wicked Witch of the East, now travels with very powerful company in *Oz Squad*.

Earth. Since there are no experts regarding Oz culture, it's decided that there would be a team of operatives headed by Dorothy to handle affairs relating to Oz and the United States. After a series of adventures from the '50s to the '80s, we pick up in the present with the first issue."

Even upon a quick examination of *Oz Squad*, it's evident that careers as government agents, coupled with past events in Oz, have left a profound impact on the familiar characters. "Dorothy has gone through many changes," says Ahlquist. "In a sense, she has lost her innocence. She's no longer the little girl who can solve problems with her wit. Instead of relying on intelligence, she relies on brute force. She also has an enormous amount of guilt. She has the weight of all the people who died in Oz because of WW II on her shoulders.

"Lion is a fairly simple character. He's very loyal to Dorothy. He doesn't come up with many ideas on his own. He has had a spell cast on him that allows him to become human only when on Earth. I figured that when you're a team of operatives, a lion is a dead giveaway.

"The most stable character is Nick Chopper, the Tin Man. He's very much centered and in control of himself. He has no problem with what he has to do. He's meditative and internal, even though he's the most violent externally, with the guns and the hulking demeanor. Inside, he's a very peaceful person. He's the glue that holds the group together.

"Scarecrow undergoes the biggest change," Ahlquist notes. "He has become very no-nonsense and unconcerned with his own safety."

While Ahlquist was solidifying the characters' personalities, the characters' appearance was entrusted to Murphy. "I had to draw Lion a lot as a lion in the third issue, and it was difficult," says Murphy. "You spend all your life learning human anatomy, and then you draw a cat and it's totally different. Look at any cat and you'll notice the gigantic shoulders. The whole form is different.

"Tin Man was pretty easy. I took a standard comic-book robot and mixed it with the classic Tin Man, with the long nose and funnel hat. That made him easily identifiable. Then, I could do whatever I wanted with him. The toughest thing about human anatomy is that the body's pose affects the muscles. I don't have to worry about that with Tin Man. He's just one piece stuck to another.

"Scarecrow took a bit longer," admits Murphy, "coming up with the straw that goes over his eyes like a lock of hair. Seen from a distance, the darkness around his eyes and his dark nose, if he's grinning, looks like a skull. He's sort of like Daredevil tying in with devils or a scary-looking Batman. The effect I'm trying to create is that of folded cloth with a little bit of stuffing inside. Every motion he makes pulls his whole body, making him look like a sheet in the breeze."

Now a member of the Oz Squad, this lion's no longer cowardly.

Ahlquist's plans include some other unlikely guest stars. "One of the ideas when I first started this was to not only use the Oz books," Ahlquist reveals, "but to approach other children's literature. The Lilliputians from *Gulliver's Travels*, descendants of the originals, appear in the second issue. They inhabit an island in the Pacific, and compete with the Japanese making microtechnology.

"You'll also see Baron Munchausen. He'll be based not only on the stories, but on a film made in 1943 by the Nazis called *Munchausen* (see STARLOG YEARBOOK #5 re: its making). The original Munchausen stories were written around the 1700s, and the Nazis adapted him as a Germanic fantasy hero. In the film, there isn't much that says he's a Nazi, but in *Oz Squad*, he'll be one of the main villains."

Munchausen, who appears in issue #4, is the key to understanding the changes in Scarecrow. "Scarecrow was in love with a girl," says Ahlquist, "a character from the Oz books. Munchausen burned her to death. Oz fans will know who she is. Haunted by the vision of the woman he loves being killed, Scarecrow has a very existential philosophy toward life."

In *Oz Squad* #1, Dorothy and company end up in a heated battle on Earth with the mechanical Tik-Tok, a character from the third Oz book, who has suddenly gone insane. "Tik-Tok has three springs—a talking spring, a thinking spring and an action spring. Baum explained what happens when

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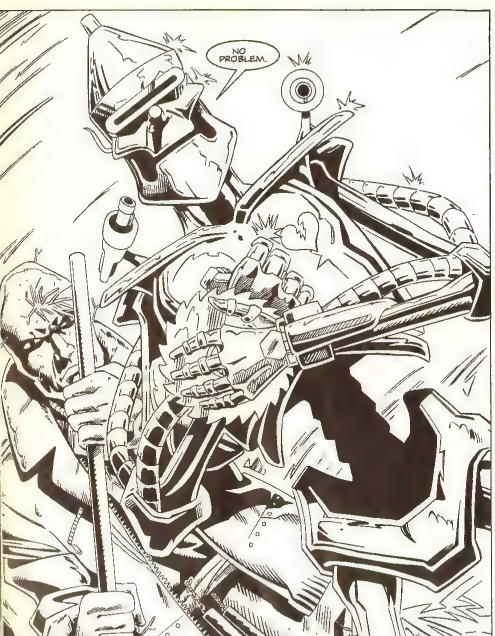
I KNOW
THIS IS A HIGH POWERED WATER PISTOL. ONE MOVE AND YOU'RE A PUDDLE.
YOU'RE WANTED ON WAR CRIME AND SEDITION CHARGES BACK IN OZ
ALL BUSINESS NOW, AREN'T WE, DOROTHY?
DAMN!
ZRATING!
Oz Squad Comics Characters & Story: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Steve Ahlquist
Oz Squad leader Dorothy Gale "is no longer the little girl who can solve problems with her wit," notes writer Steven Ahlquist.



Tin Man Nick Chopper is *Oz Squad*'s "most stable character," reveals Ahlquist, while the Scarecrow is a "no-nonsense" straw man.

each of these springs winds down. I postulated the existence of a fourth spring, a morality spring. In Oz, everything was black-and-white. On Earth, Tik-Tok's morality spring winds down, and all the different moral choices drive him berserk."

That story, "The Internal Clockwork Morality Spring," is laced with metaphors for human behavior, but Ahlquist says this particular theme is *not* the foundation for the entire series. "What I did with Tik-Tok fits in with the philosophy that I had been studying at the time. I become conscious of themes only after I develop them. I don't think I'll ever do one of those 'days at home' stories, where everyone sits around talking or goes shopping. The reader will *always* get an adventure."

"If it doesn't entertain, it doesn't work," agrees Murphy. "If it's not fun, it doesn't matter how good the allegory is, or what it tells you about life. If no one pays attention, no one gets your moral."

Tik-Tok is the linchpin for future *Oz Squad* storylines. The malevolent personality that he develops in the first issue is one step toward what will become a permanent change. "The plans for Tik-Tok, which have been stolen, go on sale to the highest bidder by the Wicked Witch of the East, renamed Rebecca Eastwitch," says Ahlquist. "The Oz Squad infiltrates her castle to recover the stolen plans. There are lots of flying monkeys and all heck breaks loose!

"Tik-Tok returns as a crime figure after escaping from Oz in issue #3. He'll remain a villain for some time. I'm not sure of the psychology of repairing people who have committed horrible crimes. He concludes that he's pretty much evil forever."

The Oz characters never made it to Earth in the original stories, though Baum wrote a series of newspaper strips around 1904 in which the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and Jack Pumpkinhead visit Earth for a short time. In *Oz Squad*, the effects of Oz on Earth culture are minor. "Earth is interested in Oz magic and technology, but your average man hasn't met many Munchkins," Ahlquist announces.

Earth's influence on Oz, however, is a different matter entirely. "Oz is a matriarchy, but there's a growing underground that's pushing for an American-type democratic system," says Ahlquist. "Ozma says, 'No way, I'm the Queen,' and Dorothy supports her. The heroes are fighting against the democratic force of change in Oz, and that could prove unpopular.

"Ozma is feeling the squeeze. She doesn't want paved roads and televisions. She doesn't want a McDonald's in the Emerald City," jokes Ahlquist. "She's fighting the changes that the people of Oz want."

From the outset, Ahlquist hasn't worried about running short of storylines. It seems ideas pop in and out of his head like a riot of butterflies. Oz characters such as the Hungry Tiger, Belina the Hen, the Hammer-Heads and General Jinjur will appear in the pages of *Oz Squad*, and much more of Scarecrow's past will be disclosed. There will also be hints of a previous love affair between Nick Chopper and the Wicked Witch of the East. Steven Ahlquist only hopes that readers will come along for the ride. "People have reacted so positively," he says. "I hope they don't give up if I don't explain everything right away. I love writing *Oz Squad*."

By STAN NICHOLLS

Deaths in the Family

Jim Starlin's heroes & villains exist in his head, on the comics page and nowhere else.

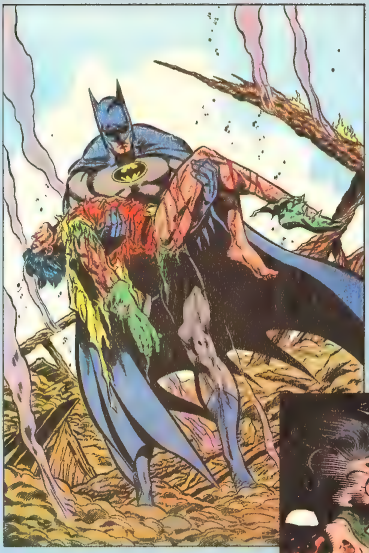
"I wouldn't have killed off Robin," Jim Starlin says. "I wouldn't even have *promoted* killing off Robin, if I had had a fan's perspective on it.

"You have to put that outlook aside when you write comics. Fans want everything to stay the same. In life—even if it's an imitation of life like a comic book—there are changes."

But, in voting for the elimination of the comic world's most famous teenage sidekick, the fans *did* favor change. Starlin obliged and performed the dirty deed in the four-parter "A Death in the Family" (*Batman* #426-429, also collected as a graphic novel).

"From the moment I walked in the door at DC, I was trying to get that little guy bumped off. Batman is better without him. Batman's much more interesting as this dark solo character in the middle of the night. I certainly think it's a mistake bringing Robin back. Anyway, in reality, Batman would probably be locked up for child endangerment!"

Like many industry professionals, Starlin started out as a fan. The bug bit when he was seven years old. "My father worked as an engineer at Chrysler in Detroit," he explains, "and Detroit's not one of your bastions of higher culture, so comic books were the only art available to me at that time. My dad would come home from work with paper and pencils, and I would sit down and trace off the comic characters. I learned how to draw from that."



All Batman Art: Jim Aparo/Mike DeCarlo/Colors: Adrienne Roy

From the moment Jim Starlin started writing *Batman*, "I was trying to get that little guy bumped off."

Art: Mike Mignola

His first attempt to get into the business in the early '70s, following a stint in the Navy, was unsuccessful. "It was very difficult to break in, because there were only a limited amount of books out then. There was a generation of artists and writers who had been doing comics from the '40s, and no one had dropped out. During that period, I think only Neal Adams, Archie Goodwin, Roy Thomas and Denny O'Neil entered the industry.

"When I approached the companies again, a year or two later, they were going through a boom and practically hiring anyone who came across the state line holding a pencil. So, I got in and I've been pretty busy ever since."

He began as a penciller for Marvel. "But I soon found some of the stories I was getting to draw were a little less than satisfying. For example, there was one where a character had been having trouble with his girl friend. He walks out of his office and kicks over a trashcan, then shakes his head sadly and says, 'Look what that woman has done to me: she's turned me into a litterbug!' I thought, 'I can do better than *this*.' So, I talked [then-editor] Roy Thomas into giving me a shot on *Captain Marvel*.

"That was the first time I was allowed to run. Up until then, I had just done a couple of different issues of books and some short stories, and I was pretty restricted. When *Captain Marvel* came along, its sales were in the toilet, so they let me do whatever I wanted. I had a great time with it."

It wasn't such a great time for the character, though; as with Robin, Starlin eventually killed him off. He did this for sound creative and commercial reasons, but the manner of Captain Marvel's death reflected a tragedy in Starlin's own life, and served a cathartic function for him. "I think it's true of any kind of writing that you can use it to work out personal frustrations. The reason I wrote *The Death of Captain Marvel* the way I did was because my father had recently died of cancer. In writing of Captain Marvel dying the same way, I was able to use the audience as my therapist. It's cheaper that way..."

These days, Starlin does much more writing than drawing. He recently finished Marvel's *Infinity Gauntlet* (CS #19) and now scripts the spin-off *Adam Warlock and the Infinity Watch* series. His output includes the novels *Among Madmen* and *Lady El*, in collaboration with his wife, Dana Graiznus. Another novel will be published soon. "I'm still drawing because I'm illustrating these books we're doing," he says. "As far as comics go, my wife likes to see me every so often, and when I was drawing, I was chained to the board.

All Warlock, Thanos & Associated Characters, Trademark & Copyright 1975, 1982, 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

"Writing isn't nearly as time-consuming as illustrating. I can get an average-size comic book out in three days. When I was drawing it, it would take me a month to get it out."

The most famous hero Starlin has written for, Batman, may have gone through more changes than any other, swinging from the grim to the absurd and back again. Starlin sees this as testament to the flexibility of Bob Kane's creation. But, given Batman's complex and contradictory nature, is he hard to write? "I found it very easy. He's one-dimensional in his drive: He wants to fight crime.

"He's borderline psychotic, in my view. Anyone who has seen his parents blasted down when he was a small child would be. But he has taken that horror and changed it into an obsessive drive. Just about everything he does or sees in life directly or

Characters like Batman and Adam Warlock "exist in my head, on the page and *nowhere else*," Starlin insists.

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indirectly involves solving a crime. If he goes on a date, it's to cover the fact that he's Batman. If he goes to a political dinner, it's to get the dirt on somebody. So it's fairly easy to have the story be character-driven rather than the character story-driven.

"When I was younger, I preferred Superman, but I changed allegiance following the changes Batman went through in the '70s and '80s. He became more of an adult character, whereas Superman pretty much stayed the same.

"Up until I took over *Batman*, I was doing mostly space stories, very cosmic stuff [*Captain Marvel, Warlock, Dreadstar*] and *Batman* gave me the chance to write some gritty crime stories, which I had been wanting to do for a long time. At that point, Batman was a totally different character; he wasn't jumping around on top of giant typewriters and pennies and stuff like that anymore. He was dealing with rapists and murderers, which was more interesting."

Starlin's *Infinity Gauntlet* and *Infinity War* started with his *Thanos Quest*.

Batman's drive makes him "borderline psychotic," notes Starlin.

Starlin acknowledges that writing about a character who is essentially a vigilante can present problems to someone with a liberal conscience.

But, "There's a sense in which you write by your gut, and much of *Batman* was writing that way. I would identify a situation that I thought outrageous, and which most of the time couldn't be helped through the courts, such as people with diplomatic immunity who were murderers and just walked away from killing someone; things the system isn't designed to handle, but somebody like Batman could. Although I wouldn't want to have to suffer his brand of law enforcement!

"One thing I learned when doing Batman was that you can only go so far before you have to lighten it up or you'll lose people. There has to be a point where you take a breath and back away from things.

"Something I don't do all the time, but try to do as often as I can, is give a balance between scenes. If one scene is negative, the next one I try to make positive. If you put two or three negative scenes back-to-back, the second scene is only going to have half the first's power. If you balance these things out you get much more of a full effect. You try to do the lightening-up and the getting heavy alternately."

When Starlin took over *Batman*, its sales were down to about 80,000 copies. "By the end of my run, by not playing safe with him, it was [DC's] bestselling book. And this was *before* the movie.

"I enjoyed the movie, incidentally; it was the best representation I've ever seen of a superhero on the screen. I thought it was an even better job than the first *Superman* film, which I liked quite a bit. At the same time, I had my problems with it. In the *Batman* TV show, it appeared that the creators had no respect for the characters, whereas in the *Batman* movie, the writers obviously had no respect for the audience's intelligence. There were holes in the story that were just outrageous."

The film's release led Starlin to quit writing *Batman*. "The movie was coming out and they were going crazy at DC. It's hard to keep consistent when you have dozens of executives coming down and giving you a hard

DC Batman Characters & Art: Trademark & ©copyright 1998 DC Comics Inc.

time and putting their two cents' worth in. It becomes art by committee, and that never works. Unfortunately, that's Batman's fate at the moment, because there'll be another movie and they want to play safe with the character."

In his introduction to the Batman graphic novel *The Cult*, Starlin expresses the fear that as comic books tackle more adult themes, there may be a danger of censorship—a rerun of the battering the industry took in the '50s. "There's quite a bit of difference between *The Cult* and Batman's regular book in terms of packaging, price and paper. So, the format does help differentiate the product.

"But I don't think everything has to be one way or the other; it doesn't all have to be dark and somber or light and fanciful. There's room for both kinds of books. Most other countries with a comic book business have an adult market that exists side-by-side with the children's market. In Japan, you walk into the subway and see adults reading comic books all the time; many of them pornographic, some of them adventure. In Europe, they have a different attitude toward comics as well."

When working on a story, does he ever have the feeling he is walking a tightrope of acceptability? "If it's a regular comic book, I have the Comics Code Authority to deal with. On something like the graphic novels, where I can get a little bit wilder, I still have to take into consideration the feelings and standards of the publisher's editorial staff. That's why I also write novels. There are things I want to write about which I couldn't even put in a graphic novel.

"Then again, I have my own code. I mean, I wouldn't show a child being raped. Although I did once do a story about a kid in an incestuous relationship, it was all off-camera and done rather sedately. There are certain things you *have* to write about."

The writer/artist likes using plywood and three-by-five cards on a large project to "break it down scene by scene."

Whatever the subject, the creative process usually begins the same way. "I'll be driving down the road or hanging around the house and the characters will have their movies going on in my head. I then take a legal pad and draw out pages into little boxes. I make the panel breakdowns in them and jot down notes about what's happening. That way I have an idea of what the page will look like when it comes out.

"Sometimes on a larger project what I'll do is get a piece of plywood, a bunch of three-by-five cards and break it down scene by scene that way. I can move them around, rearrange things, play different directions with it. I can also balance the scenes so I get that positive/negative weight. That's how I did *The Cult*.

"Every comic's different, and my biggest problem is getting the time to be able to do all the things I *want* to do. My problem is not getting things started, it's getting them to stop."

Before *Batman*, Starlin wrote "very cosmic stuff" for books like *Warlock*.

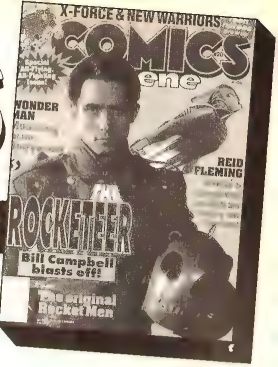
All Warlock & Thanos Art Jim Starlin

According to Starlin, the relationship between a writer and a reader on a long-term basis should be frustrating. "Which is why I say it's fatal to write purely for fans. If you do that, you're writing to their expectations, and once you fulfill those expectations, the character becomes dull.

"Steve Englehart was writing *The*

(continued on page 66)

ON THE COMICS scene



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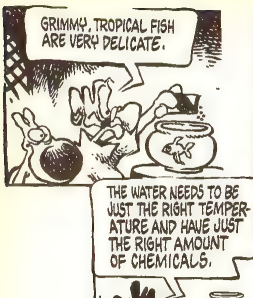
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GRIMM's Keeper

Mike Peters, the Peter Pan of American cartooning, keeps on drawing. And he doesn't grow old.

By BOB MILLER

As a youngster, Mike Peters knew he wanted to be a cartoonist—an animated one. He grew up watching Disney and Warner Bros. cartoons, and he would have become an animator if not for a sobering realization.

"When you really do animated cartoons, you start losing your eyesight," he says. "You've got to keep drawing those cartoons, hundreds of them, over and over again."

Thus, he redirected his artistic talents into a related career—editorial cartooning. After graduating from Washington University in 1965, Peters joined the art staff of the *Chicago Daily News*. In 1969, he started drawing for the *Dayton Daily News*; and in 1972, United Features Syndicate began distributing his political cartoons.

"I was influenced by many of the great comic strips," Peters says. "*Pogo*, for sure, influenced the way that I draw. Then, I started getting moved by political cartoonists—people like Bill Mauldin, who is a great political cartoonist formerly for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, now with the *Chicago Sun-Times* [Mauldin had recommended Peters for the *Dayton Daily News*] and Pat Oliphant and Don Wright, all giants in the editorial cartooning field."

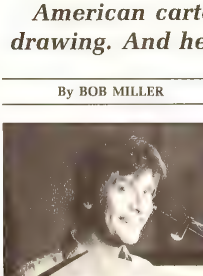


Photo: CBS/Julia Konrad

Cartoonist Mike Peters has good reason to be positively Grimm these days.

Peters eventually became one of the "giants," winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1981, the National Cartoonist Society Reuben Award for Editorial Cartooning in 1983 and 1984, the Ohio Governor's Award, 1985; the Robert F. Kennedy Award, 1986 and 1990; plus many other accolades. *NBC Nightly News* has shown "Peters' Postscripts," the first animated editorial cartoons broadcast regularly on a prime-time network newscast. And, he hosted a 14-part interview series for PBS, *The World of Cartooning with Mike Peters*.

"I was coming up with more ideas than those for the editorial cartoons," Peters recollects. "I wanted to have a forum for them, and that's how I came up with the idea of *Mother Goose and Grimm*."

Adds Peters, "I wanted something dealing with fantasy. I had thought it was just going to be a daily gag thing. I didn't think I would have dominant characters, even though I wanted characters called Mother Goose and

Grimm, but I wanted to be able to do *Far Side*-type, semi-social ideas—*anything* that came to mind."

Mother Goose and Grimm premiered in October 1984, syndicated by Tribune Media Services. The strip starred Grimm ("Grimmy"), a hyperactive canine with a lust for trash, toilets and fast automobiles. Nevertheless, he's adored by his owner, Mother Goose, who lives in a giant shoe with her nervous cat, Attila, and a perpetually hungry pig named Ham. Sometimes characters from other comic strips and cartoons appear, such as Garfield and Yogi Bear.

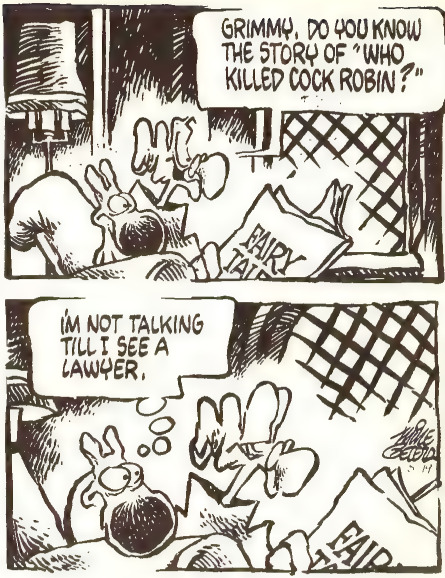
In *Mother Goose*'s second year, Peters began losing enthusiasm, feeling like a "wasted scuzz"—until a certain yellow dog named Grimm rekindled his interest.

Peters realized that *he* was Grimm. "I found that strips can be autobiographical," he says. "I could put in a ton of experiences from my life like dating, going to school, going to the doctor and getting shots, and having mothers yelling at you about cleaning up your room.

"Once I started really tapping my experiences, feelings and fears, and putting them into the strip, that's when it really caught on and I picked up more newspapers.

"The strips that are really good are the ones that deal with a certain truth. Charlie Brown is that poor little guy in all of us that everybody always makes fun of and points to, and he always feels alienated. *Calvin and Hobbes* touches that child-like imagination in everybody. The Cathy Guisewite strip [*Cathy*] deals with the same kind of fears of a Charlie Brown, but in an adolescent or older girl. Those things are true in just about all of us."

Currently, *Mother Goose and Grimm* is printed in nearly 600 newspapers worldwide. Since February 1986, over a dozen *Mother Goose*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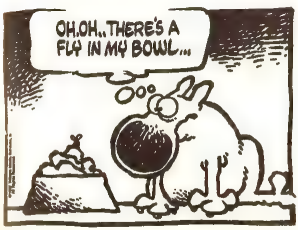
books have been published. MGM-Pathé's Licensing and Merchandising division offers more than 100 items featuring Grimmy's likeness.

On September 14, 1991, CBS-TV premiered the animated version of *Mother Goose and Grimm*. Lee Mendelson Film Productions, Film Roman Productions and MGM/UA Television Production Group produced the series (see page 53), with Peters supervising all 13 episodes.

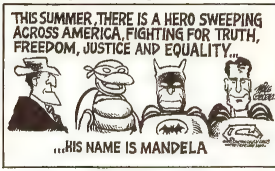
At this point, Peters' creative output shows no signs of ebbing. "Often, with comic strips, the creator starts getting burnt out after eight or nine years," he says.



The *Mother Goose* strip bugged Peters until he added Grimmy.

Developing political cartoons isn't always so much fun for Peters.

Peters admits that he's "influenced by many of the great comic strips."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"Many people think that comic strips have a 10-year cycle, and that the cartoonist has done everything he's going to do in the first 10 years, and then you coast on that for the rest of your life.

"What I'm finding is that, because of the way I've structured my strip, it's very eclectic," Peters explains. "I can do single-panel gags, two-or-three week storylines, cartoons with or without the characters, social commentary, funny nonsense, puns. It's like I'm doing three or four different strips, and it's all within the framework of *Mother Goose and Grimm*. I love being able to do that."

Peters now resides in Florida with his wife (billed on the cartoon series with a different credit every week, such as Masseuse: Marian "Fast Hands" Peters, or Dog Handler: Marian "Choke-Chain" Peters) and three daughters. There he spends his time drawing *Mother Goose* strips every day, and drawing four or five editorial cartoons each week, *and* overseeing the TV series.

How does he handle the workload? "Well, I *was* working day and night most of last summer, when we were working directly on the animation.

"The diversity of what I do makes it so that after I get done with one thing and turn around to do something else, I'm refreshed. It's such a different part of the brain, working on the strip vs. the political cartoons—a different way of thinking."

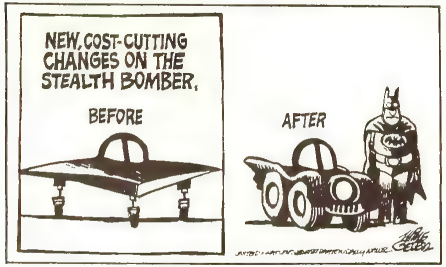
In discussing his strip, Peters sounds much younger than his age of 48; his enthusiasm is such that Garry Trudeau of *Doonesbury* has dubbed him "The Peter Pan of American Cartooning."

Says Peters, "Here I've worked for 14 years as a political cartoonist, *agonizing* over these political cartoons. I would get up in the morning, start reading the paper, watching the news, maybe have my topics for the political cartoon by around 10 or 11:00 a.m.—then I would try to figure out a way to get my feelings on those specific topics, 'OK, how am I going to put this across in a political cartoon?' An idea may come pretty easy, or it may take five hours. Then, you've got to draw it. Well, the drawing is kind of fun, because you let your hand do a lot of it. You sit there and either say, 'No, I don't like what you did, Hand,' or 'Yeah, I really *like* that.'

"I would spend all day working on a political cartoon. Now I don't have [that] time. I find that, within my day, I can do a political cartoon, one or two comic strips, and work on some animation ideas—and I'm producing in a day over twice the amount that I had through those first 15 years.

"It's mind-boggling that, after doing the strip for eight years, I've got a filing cabinet of *thousands* of cartoons that would never have been done if I hadn't started doing the comic strip. And I'm *not* twice as tired as I would have been if I had just been doing four cartoons a week for the last eight years.

"What I'm saying sounds hokey. And yet I'm so *proud* that I've done this work, and I'm still here. I haven't had a heart attack," Mike Peters says with amazement. "I'm having two or three times as much fun as I've ever had in my life, so I feel blessed." CS



Other famous comics characters have a habit of popping up in Peters' cartoons.

All Grimm & Editorial Cartoon Art: Mike Peters

GRIMMY'S GOOSE STORIES

By BOB MILLER
Copyright 1991, 1992 Lee Mendelson-Film Roman, Inc. and MGM/UA Television Production Group, a division of Metro-Color Communications Co.
All Mother Goose Animated Art & Photos:

Mike Peters' comic strip dog & pals find animated ways to be neurotic.

Historically, Saturday morning TV has produced many ugly stories of comic strips transformed into unrecognizably altered cartoons. Such animated mutations frightened Mike Peters, the Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist and creator of *Mother Goose and Grimm*.

For the past five years, studios have asked Peters to let them animate *Mother Goose*. After all, it's a popular strip, published in nearly 600 papers worldwide, spawning a dozen books and more than 100 licensed products. A cartoon series would increase the characters' visibility and generate more revenue from merchandise.

But to the would-be producers, Peters just said no.

"I've heard lots of horror stories from cartoonists who had their cartoons turned into animation features and had absolutely no control over *any* of the process," he relates. "The creators would say, 'I would like control over the stories, character studies, storyboards and voices.' And the networks or the studios or the syndicates would say, 'No, leave it to us. We know what we're doing.' "

However, the idea of an animated series appealed to Peters. Not wanting his *Goose* to be cooked, he consulted his friends, Jim (*Garfield*) Davis and Charles (*Peanuts*) Schulz. They recommended Emmy award-winning producer Lee Mendelson, who adapted *Garfield* and *Peanuts* for television and maintained those strips' integrity.

Peters asked another friend, Mike Georgopolis, to interest Mendelson in the strip and sell it to one of the networks. Mendelson agreed and proposed the series to Judy Price, head of CBS' children's programming.

"I thought I would have to go out there and convince them," Peters says. "But Lee called me up and said, 'She loves the strip. She wants it to be a Saturday morning show.' "

The network asked for a half-hour series of 13 episodes. Mendelson arranged for Phil Roman's studio, Film Roman, to produce the animation, as they had on *Garfield & Friends*. They would also collaborate with MGM/UA's Television Production Group. And to Mike Peters' delight, he became an executive producer (along with Mendelson and Roman), with final say-so in decisions regarding *Mother Goose and Grimm*.

"Oh, they gave me *total* freedom," Peters says with amazement. "I did the character studies. I picked out all the voices. I picked the music. I picked out the stories.

"I was *extremely* worried about the writer, because I knew I couldn't write all these things myself, especially if we're doing 13 episodes [26 stories]. I couldn't write 26 stories, and still keep my job as a political cartoonist and still do the strip.

"Lee gave me this fabulous writer named Mark Evanier, who had done most of the writing on *Garfield*, and said, 'I'm going to ask Mark to write a couple of sample stories. Look it over and see what you think.' Mark wrote a couple and FAXed them to me; I read them and I laughed."

Evanier is well known to CS readers for writing countless comic books (*Groo the Wanderer, New Gods, Hollywood Superstars, DNAgents*), live-action TV shows (*Cheers, Welcome Back, Kotter, That's Incredible!*) and cartoons (*Richie Rich* and *Garfield*, which he discussed in CS #5).

Originally, Evanier recommended

that the show's format should be one story per half-hour.

"There were two reasons," Evanier says. "One was selfishness—it's just easier to write that way. You have to come up with just one plot instead of two, if you're going to do a whole half-hour.

"The other reason was to differentiate it more from the seven-minute *Garfield* cartoons. At the outset—since we had the same writer, voice director, and most of the same artists and storyboard people from *Garfield*—there was a fear that the show might be too similar. Instead of a show about a cat and a dog, this was a show about a dog and a cat," Evanier chuckles.

"But, Judy Price at CBS wanted shorter cartoons, so we compromised and came up with the 18- and seven-minute format."

Peters selected about 20 of his favorite situations (called "springboards") that he had done with the dog Grimmy, such as Grimmy attending obedience school, guarding the house or going on a date.

"I would send Mark these springboards, and then he would work on those, along with working on his own ideas," Peters says. "After I saw the first two shows, I *laughed*; they had the dog absolutely *nailed* as far as his personality. Then, I knew that Mark was an absolute gem. I was very lucky to have Mark."

Says Evanier, "I not only got 13 weeks' work out of the show, I got a very good friend out of it, too.

"Essentially, the way we worked, I would tell him what I wanted to do. He would feed me ideas he had for sequences. In other words, I would say, 'I've got a story in mind where Grimmy has to get inside a shopping mall,' and Mike would think up three or four funny ways to have Grimmy try to get inside the shopping mall and FAX them to me. We got some very visual gags.

Evanier was glad that producer Lee Mendelson "was willing to kick in extra money to do the show right."

"We had to do these shows in a *very* short period of time," Evanier confides. "To give the artists maximum time to work, we had to write them very quickly and record them very quickly. Even with that, we frequently ended up delivering the show to the network the day before it aired. We barely made every airdate.

"Near the end, we got so tight that I would have to write scripts without Mike seeing them first. I sent him a FAX [when the show aired] saying, 'Thank you for trusting me with your children,' because he had to take a certain leap of faith. To get the shows done, I had to write them without as much input from him as we wanted, and then get his input at the back end and get it into the storyboards."

Peters also involves himself in the storyboards, the "blueprint" of a cartoon. He describes the storyboard stage as, "a *long*, tedious affair, with thousands of these little drawings explaining the [action]. If I saw it and I wanted to redo it, God love them, they [Film Roman] said, 'Absolutely.' They would be kind enough to wait for me to get done, even though the storyboard should have been in there two weeks before. And I did that up until the very last storyboard was produced, which was about two weeks after the show was on the air, in October."

Selecting the voices was a long process, as Peters shuttled between his Florida home and the Los Angeles studio. By coincidence, the actors that Peters and Evanier chose to be Grimm and Mother Goose were married.

"It's also a coincidence that I worked with Charlie Brill and Mitzi McCall on some of my first TV writing 15 years ago," Evanier states. "Their agent suggested them for *Mother Goose and Grimm*; we auditioned them separately and together. Mike would do a drawing of the dog and stare at the drawing while he listened to all the auditions, and he kept saying to himself, 'Do I hear this voice coming out of that dog?' And after listening to tapes over and over again, Mike realized that Charlie's voice was coming out of the dog. We listened to all the different Mother Gooses, and we finally realized that Mitzi *was* Mother Goose."

Attila the cat (who "sounds like he has a bowel problem," Peters remarks), Magic Mirror, Thor the Bulldog and several supporting characters are performed by Greg Burson, a protege of the late Daws Butler, who now voices Yogi Bear, Snagglepuss and other Hanna-Barbera characters. He alternates with Noel Blanc and Jeffrey Bergman in doing Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and several other of the late Mel Blanc's characters for Warner Bros. Burson also took over the late Jim Backus' role as Mr. Magoo.

Eddie Deezen, the voice of Snipes the magpie in *Rock-a-Doodle*, had originally auditioned for Grimm, but wound up as Ham the Pig. Recalls Evanier, "We reshaped the character basically around Eddie's personality as it was manifested in his voice."

Guest voices include veteran voice-artist Howard Morris (Wade the Duck on *Garfield & Friends*) as a Dr. Seuss-type friend from Mother Goose's past; comedian Pete Barbutti; genre writer Harlan Ellison as the Evil Magic Mirror; Jack Burns as police sergeant Fogarty; Hal Rayle as Rottweiler the dog catcher; Tress MacNeille (Babs Bunny from *Tiny Toon Adventures*) as Carl the Wonder Poodle; Stan Freberg as a Geraldo-type TV host and Claude Debris, Chief Unwanted Materials Removal Specialist (i.e. "garbage collector"); and June Foray (Rocket J. Squirrel) voicing some witches.

Film Roman, Inc. and MGM/UA Television Production Group

Not only did Mark Evanier write most of the episodes, he directed the voices—a dual service he began (and continues to do) on *Garfield & Friends*.

"It seemed like a natural extension," he says. "Everybody was very happy with the voice directing on *Garfield*, and they were buying the same writer, so we just segued over."

Evanier has an advantage over other voice directors: "I have the power to rewrite the script, and they do not," he remarks. "I have the power to actually write the script for a specific actor, which I *have* done.

***Mother Goose and Grimm* cartoonist Mike Peters' initial fears in bringing his creation to TV have now been replaced with excitement.**

"Your average voice director is an outsider. He or she is handed a script, 'Here, direct this.' They're not involved in the animation or the editing. I'm involved in the entire process. As we had on *Mother Goose and Grimm*, I can go in after the show is recorded and have extra lines added.

"My involvement as a writer on a cartoon show doesn't stop at handing in the script. I'm involved with the casting, the directing of the voices, the storyboard (I make suggestions on those). I battle with the Standards & Practices people when they want to change things. And since I'm at the recording session anyway—correcting lines, making suggestions and changing things—it's neater to have me direct. There's one less person there to argue with," Evanier chuckles. "I'm also real cheap."

In translating the strip to television, Evanier notes that changes were minor. "The show is the comic strip and the comic strip is the show. The strip has more cameo appearances by people from other cartoons. *Peanuts* characters wander into *Mother Goose and Grimm* and Wile E. Coyote turns up every so often, and this kind of thing makes other animation studios very upset. So, we've refrained from that.

"Ham the Pig is redesigned. We changed his personality a bit because we felt he was too similar to some of the other characters. Mike's cast is essentially a bunch of neurotics. The dog is neurotic; the pig is neurotic; the cat is neurotic. So, we had to find *different* ways for them to be neurotic.

"If you have to change the strip to make it a cartoon, what's the point of doing it? And I don't think we changed it much at all."

In drawing *Mother Goose* for the comics, Peters uses a thick-thin brush line so the characters stand out on the newspaper page. Remarkably, this bold-line quality is emulated by the TV show.

"Animated cartoons are initially drawn in pencil and the pencil is xeroxed onto cels and painted, so you end up with a very thin pencil line around your characters. The people at Film Roman felt that Grimmy and his friends wouldn't look correct with that thin pencil line, so—Lee Mendelson was willing to kick in extra money to do the project right," Evanier says.

"Many different experiments were done," explains line producer Bob Curtis. "We were using pens and brushes and whatever else. The simplest, and most controllable way was to use a particular kind of soft, very black pencil [an Electronic Scorer, used in such tests as the SAT] and actually draw that thick-and-thin line."

Making up this *Grimm* bunch are producer Bob Curtis, Charlie Brill (Grimmy), Greg Burson (Attila and Mirror), Peters, writer Mark Evanier, Mitzi McCall (Mother Goose) and Eddie Deezen (Ham).

Based on these experiments, the overseas subcontractor, Cuckoo's Nest of Taiwan, devised a similar method of reproducing the thick-and-thin line. A specialized crew of six-to-twelve cleanup artists applied that distinctive line to every drawing, a task which the regular animators and their assistants lacked the time to do. The special unit also ensured that the characters' drawings remained "on model," looking exactly like they do in the comic strip.

"The people at Film Roman are very conscientious," Evanier says. "Phil Roman is a rarity in this business—a studio head who actually cares about the quality of cartoons and how they're done. There is too much of a tendency for studios to be run by businessmen, as opposed to artists. Phil is an artist first, a businessman second. I think studios should *always* be run by people like Phil Roman."

Evanier enjoys enormous creative freedom on *Mother Goose* and *Garfield* that other cartoons don't usually have, with limited interference from the network.

"I don't hand in premises; I don't hand in stuff for approvals," he says. "We still have to get some interesting input from CBS, but they've trusted me and left me alone because they've gotten positive results.

"It has been my experience that the networks usually don't interfere unless they have a reason to think that their non-participation is going to result in a bad show. And we took *Garfield* and *Mother Goose* very seriously. We approach them as shows that will be on a very long time. Indeed, we're now starting *Garfield*'s fifth season."

Mother Goose and Grimm has gotten a good reaction from the industry, but there's a slight problem: "Ratings-wise, our audience is too old for the time slot," he says. "CBS bases its advertising rates—the money McDonald's pays for the commercials you have to sit through—on the ratings achieved by kids two through 12 only. And *Mother Goose and Grimm* is running high with an older audience, second with kids two to 12. Unfortunately, we're running a close second at a time when CBS is running first in all other time slots, so a close second is not good enough."

Although the show is not posted on CBS' current fall schedule, the network has ordered five scripts. Mike Peters and Mark Evanier are currently discussing new story ideas.

Says Peters, "The TV series will probably be doing exactly what it's done with perhaps more pantomime, more animation. I was looking at a bunch of Charlie Chaplin movies over the last couple of months, and I *love* pantomime. Very rarely on Saturday morning do you see any kind of pantomime, and I want to stress for more pantomime for this coming year.

"It's just exciting for me as a creator to be working on it, and hopefully, it's also exciting for the fans of *Mother Goose and Grimm*."

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Adams

(continued from page 28)

like ours; he can't function in daily life."

Brody is recruited into a government organization whose rather chaotic attitude is that tossing this psychotic character into the middle of a problem can't make things any worse. But...

"Whenever they send this guy in, he always does the worst things possible. Thing is, we really like this character! People will say there's no way we could build a book around him, but I think it can be done, and we can tell plenty of interesting stories along the way."

Shaman is the book that Adams finds hardest to explain. "The Shaman character lives in three different times simultaneously," he says. "Two of them live in antediluvian [pre-Great Flood] times, but on different continents, while the third lives in modern times. They all share this goal of destroying magic. Magic is interesting and entertaining, but it's holding mankind back from our ultimate destiny—Shaman's task is to destroy magic so that we can continue to evolve.

"Doing *Shaman* is my way of doing stories set in antediluvian times without re-creating Conan, which is something I *do not* want to do. What's most interesting to me is that the word 'Shaman' is very difficult to trace back in time as a word—it appeared in widely separate locations about the same time and can't be traced back much further, which makes me think it could have been a proper name at one point."

Shaman will be introduced in *Armor*, spinning off from there into what Adams hopes will be a monthly title, or a series of graphic novels.

Light-heartedly, Adams confesses that he has since discovered what a punishing business publishing can be.

"It's a more pleasant business now than it was two or more years ago," he admits. "We've built up better relationships with distributors and have been working to get books out on a more regular basis. Sometimes, like with the *CyberRad* hologram cover, we resort to gimmicks to get attention, but those aren't ripoffs. We're always looking to make our comics better, more exciting, more interesting."

Adams also says he is finally able to step back from overseeing every phase of every book's production.

"I'm glad I don't have to supervise as much anymore," he says. "It's nice to be able to go and play. Hey, comics are like toys to me! I love working on comics and look forward to doing more of my own stuff soon."

He's also proud of his company's books, in terms of appearance and storytelling.

"If you pick up a Continuity book and set it down next to another book, you say, 'Heck, there's a lot going on in here!' It surprises me how the company's style comes up to the same standard. It hits a range of quality, a certain standard we'll never go below. I believe very strongly in that."

After all these years, Adams is still excited about the tremendous possibilities in comics. "Think about it: Painted comic books! Computerized color! Maybe someday, an artist can color his own work, if the process becomes fast enough. The possibilities are endless and we've barely even scratched the surface. I think the next step will be a stronger relationship between comics and film. There are some comics people who could be doing movies, who would be *perfect* for them, since comics and film are both visual media, trying to tell a story with pictures. Comic-book work seems like a natural training ground."

All in all, however, there's no telling what the future will bring. As Neal Adams says, "If I knew what we were doing tomorrow, we would be doing it today."

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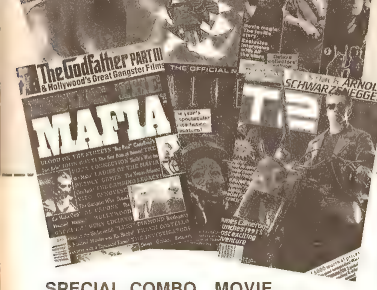

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Rust

(continued from page 12)

Power, Ragman, WoodGod," Hester recalls. "These characters that nobody ever remembers weren't very heroic, but definitely distinctive looking. It's boring to draw a square-jawed archetypal hero 24 hours a day, so it's great to get a character about whom nothing is normal."

In *Taboo* #4, the quote which Hester offered to accompany a brief but jarring collage-style short story called "Dreaming and the Law" was that he "wants to be a puppeteer rather than an artist, attempting to break out of prescribed molds from *all* ends." Also known for *Fringe*, a Caliber title which has often been described as cyberpunk in tone even if it isn't strictly science fiction, Hester explains that he adapts his style to each individual book.

"Each project I do deserves a personal interpretation from me," he remarks. "What is important is what I can do artistically to forward the story. *Rust* is far more straightforward in style than *Fringe*, for example, which is a little more cutting-edge. I bring something to *Rust* that I don't think another artist could bring to it. I share Steve's commitment to his original vision."

Hester will be back experimenting with collage again for *Rust* covers, starting with issue #2. He's also currently at work on a three-issue series for Dark Horse called *Freaks Amor*, based on a Tom DeHaven novel.

The one thing Hester wasn't able to pull off, however, was a six-foot actual rusting-metal model of his newest character to accompany him on a store-signing circuit through Iowa and Kansas this April, to the Kansas City Comic Book Club Convention in May and to this summer's Chicago and San Diego Comic Cons.

"We thought that would be the coolest thing ever," Steve Miller offers, with a laugh. "But to make it really look like him, *it would rust*. Phil got all this rusted metal, but it was rusting too fast. We would have had to rebuild the model four times, one for the store tour and one for each con."

It was a dream sacrificed to cardboard, for reasons of practicality. But Steve Miller has found himself in a position where if small dreams fall by the wayside, he knows strong characters and stories never rust away.

"I own the book now, so if it's ever there without me again, it'll be with my blessing," he says. "But I can't imagine circumstances that would bring that about. *Rust*'s my baby, and I'm not going to let it go." CS

Spawn

(continued from page 21)

He may be a creature of the night, but Spawn won't "go out there and be a Punisher," promises McFarlane.

next best thing to having a union."

McFarlane recognizes that although the Image creators are hot at the moment, the comics public can be very fickle, so Image is making plans for the future.

"We're looking for other guys to come in here, too. As we fade out, somebody else will come in. People will always be going, 'Cool, Image Comics, look what they've got coming up!' If more commercial guys keep joining us, maybe it'll send a message to the corporations. If they don't change the system, they're going to keep losing their major talent, because we can put out a package that neither Marvel nor DC can match. If they want to go and make Dale Keown the next superstar, perfect! Because I'm going to get Dale Keown in a year. You want to make Andy Kubert the next hot guy? Perfect! Because I'm going to get Andy Kubert, too! The only way they'll stop the exodus is by changing the rules. If we change even one rule, then I'll go to my grave happy."

McFarlane says creators working today owe a great debt to the artists and writers who came before them.

"Guys like Kirby and Mike Grell stuck their necks out years ago, going to independents, and I get a royalty check now because of that, so I'm benefitting from what those guys did. I'm trying to do something that will give the next set of artists something that will make it easier to deal with.

"Marvel and DC were good to us in many ways, but it's the system," Todd McFarlane says. "It always did rub me wrong." CS

Nomad

(continued from page 32)

Besides *Nomad*, Nicieza, previously interviewed in CS #20, is busy writing Marvel's *X-Annuals*, wherein the home dimension of Longshot, Shatterstar, Mojo and Spiral is more fully explored and the way is paved for Longshot's return to the X-Men. At first, Nicieza says he was only going to write one annual, but ended up doing all four.

"Bob [Harras, editor of the X-books] said he was going to look for some more writers. I asked later if he had found any and he said, 'Uh, yeah, yeah, I'm working on it,' which is editorese for 'nope.' And then it's down to crunch time and I hear, 'Fabe, get me those four plot outlines by Monday.' It pays well, but I don't enjoy writing the mutant annuals. It's difficult, not really a fun job. But I heard which artists they're getting and I was psyched to work with them. We came up with some pretty cool things. I did enjoy writing the *X-Factor* annual, just because Peter David set down some excellent groundwork for them, no pun intended.

"We explore the dimension as Ann Nocenti and Art Adams created it for their limited series," he adds. "Everything I did came from their work. It might not be exactly as they would have envisioned it, but the stuff I did derives from their work. It's not encyclopedic—it just adds more to that world, and makes it more user-friendly for other writers to use."

Also coming up is *Thrash*, a limited series for the former Night Thrasher of *New Warriors*. He gets a new look, including a new name and some "very cool" new armor that Nicieza helped design.

"This series follows up a four-part *New Warriors* story leading up to issue #25," he says. "Dwayne Taylor consolidates the sins of his past to make way for the future. The new armor is very cool visually—it kicks ass; it's a great look. This series will be successful enough to make a *Thrash* title, and I'll go along with it.

"I can also hint about the upcoming mutant crossover for this fall," he adds, "it's tentatively called 'Sins of the Father' and will reveal many things about the characters that not only surprise the readers but surprise the teams. We haven't worked out all the details, but they'll open eyes."

In the meantime, the writer expects he'll be taking some odd journeys with Nomad.

"I like writing this character," Fabian Nicieza says. "There's lots to Nomad. The potential is there." CS

Zak (Jonathan Ward) and Crysta (Samantha Mathis) join forces to save *FernGully: The Last Rainforest.*

FernGully Tales

Animated elves, fairies & bats unite to save the world's last rainforest.

By KYLE COUNTS

One day in 1990, Australian businessman Wayne Young walked into the offices of Kroyer Films with an idea for an animated film. As conceived by his wife, author Diana Young, it concerned a tribe of magical creatures whose enchanted rainforest home is threatened with destruction by humans. By day's end, the Kroyers—Bill and his wife, Sue—had agreed to take on their biggest professional undertaking to date, a project that would consume close to two years of their lives.

That Bill Kroyer came to direct *FernGully: The Last Rainforest* can't simply be labeled a case of right timing; anyone of Kroyer's spiritual bent knows there is no such thing as an accident, even a happy one. For him, it was an opportunity to use the medium he loves best—animation—for a higher purpose: To sound a cry of alarm that the world's rainforests are quickly becoming extinct, diminishing at the rate of 35.2 million acres annually. "I would not have done the movie had it not been for the subject matter," he admits.

The $20 million ecological fable, written by Jim (*The Rescuers Down Under*) Cox, tells the story of a fairy named Crysta, who lives in the heart of a rainforest called FernGully. "She hears this legend that humans really do exist, and goes off on an adventure to find a human," explains Kroyer. "Unfortunately, she comes upon a logging crew that's tearing down the rainforest. She saves the life of a young logger, a teenager named Zak, by accidentally shrinking him to fairy size. When she can't unshrink him, she takes him back to the rainforest, to the tribe's elders. On the way, they learn about each other and he discovers the wonders of the rainforest. When the human logging machine, called The Leveller, and the evil spirit that it has unleashed, Hexxus, converge on FernGully, the human boy and the fairies unite to save the last of the rainforest."

Young always envisioned *FernGully* as an environmentally conscientious-animated movie. Buoyed by his newfound visibility as associate producer of *"Crocodile" Dundee*, he approached FAI Insurances of Australia for funding, an outfit whose film subsidiary had previously existed only for tax-relief purposes, according to Kroyer. Rodney Adler, who had recently taken control of the company, agreed to help finance the film, and Young set sail for Hollywood in search of an animation studio.

Recalls Kroyer, who was trained at

All FernGully Photos & Art: Copyright, 1992 20th Century Fox

Disney (he worked on both *Pete's Dragon* and *The Fox and the Hound*) and nominated in 1989 for an Academy Award for his animated short, *Technological Threat*, "He looked at every major animation studio before he came to us. After spending the day with Sue and I, he said, 'You are the perfect people to do this film.' "

Young didn't choose Kroyer Films simply because they came highly recommended by Jim Cox, whose wife, Penney Finkelman Cox, produced *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (for which Kroyer animated the opening titles). "It was an absolutely illogical, irrational and gut reaction," says Kroyer. "We made a spiritual connection, what can I say? He talked to us about his vision for the movie and we explained to him what the project meant to us in terms of how we would make it, and the kind of quality that would be involved. We were on the same wavelength.

"He didn't want to do a Hanna-Barbera-style movie, a Saturday morning-looking movie; and he didn't want to do a Disney kiddie movie. He had a special movie in mind: It had to be innovative and bold and have substance, but it also had to have the quality of a Disney film."

Insisting that a movie about the rainforest couldn't be researched through books and existing photographs, Wayne Young spent the last of his development money taking the Kroyers and nine others to the Australian rainforest for a month. "We sketched, painted, drew, hiked, got drenched in rainstorms and handled pythons—the whole deal. We had a mind-blowing experience there," Kroyer relates.

"If we hadn't gone on that trip, this movie wouldn't have been anything at all like it is. Every sequence came out of our life experience. We didn't get any of it out of a book. Whenever it came time to do a scene, we would remember an experience—something we did or saw. We put those feelings in the movie."

Photo: Cliff Lipson

Mathis has "embodied" Crysta ever since she auditioned for the part, says Kroyer. Protecting her is Pips, voiced by Christian Slater.

One such experience involved Kroyer and his mates being deluged by blood-sucking leeches, who fairly flung themselves on the group as they hiked through the rainforest.

"My wife was really freaked out by all these leeches crawling up her jeans. So, she had the camera guys tape her jeans to her shoes with gaffing tape. So, we go hiking off into the forest. Well, about a mile-and-a-half in, the rain has caused this tape to start to peel back. So what she essentially has got [hanging from her pant legs] is flypaper. These leeches crawl up her legs and then they get stuck. About two miles later, she looks down and screams—she has about 50 leeches stuck to her, all wiggling and everything. At that point, she and a couple other guys went back to the lodge. They couldn't take any more.

"Out of that experience, we became committed to having leeches in the movie. Every time we would story-board them in, the producers would say, 'No, no—this is gross, you can't do this.' Toward the movie's end, we have this song where our hero, Zak, learns that now that he's three inches tall, he has become part of the food chain; he has all those horrendous experiences getting chased around the rainforest. At one point, he falls into this muddy creek. Out come 50 leeches, all the same size as him. We got a kick out of that. We made them gruesome-looking: Black, with burgundy veins running down their bodies."

It will take the combined might of the fairies to save their rainforest from ignorant humans and Hexxus.

About six days before the excursion's end, Young revealed to Kroyer that FAI's board of directors hadn't yet formally agreed to the project; Kroyer would have to make a final presentation in order to clinch the deal. The Kroyers drove 100 miles to the nearest town and "bought every piece of matteboard we could find," spending the next three days matting 110 pieces of artwork for the presentation in Sydney.

The board, made up of respected Australian businessmen, were at first opposed to the project. The proposed budget was three times larger than any film made up to that point in Australia. But, based on Kroyer's impassioned presentation, they did an about-face and unanimously gave Young the go-ahead. "They said if they didn't do it, they would be visionless men," Young told the Kroyers over a champagne victory toast.

Production management proved to be the Kroyers' biggest challenge in making *FernGully: The Last Rainforest.* With only 11 employees on their payroll, they knew they couldn't make the film in their Burbank facility. They would have to not only comb Los Angeles in search of artists to handle the workload, but would also have to find new, larger quarters to house the production's 18 departments. Eventually, they took over the building on the site of the old

Animated films are easy to cast. "They don't involve much work for actors."

Grace Zabriskie relocates from *Twin Peaks* to *FernGully* to voice Magi Lune, mentor of the nature spirits.

Stroh's Brewery in Van Nuys, California, where interiors for *Showdown in Little Tokyo* were filmed. Because Kroyer was unable to find enough talent in LA, he also set up animation units in Canada and England, with additional work farmed out to Copenhagen and Korea.

Despite the movie's title and setting, Kroyer insists it is neither "anti-logging" nor specifically a rainforest movie. "The rainforest is a place where any sensitive person will understand the wonder of the world. The wonders of the rainforest are so magical, so pronounced, that it instantly teaches you that life is a miracle to be shared. We need to recognize that being part of this [chain of life] carries with it a responsibility. By not being aware of it, or not acting on that awareness, we're as guilty as someone who is a destroyer. 'You're either on the bus or off the bus,' as Ken Kesey used to say.

"When you go to the rainforest, you see an irreplaceable, magical place that's being uselessly destroyed. It absolutely tears your heart out. So, of course, you want people to do the obvious thing and stop destroying the rainforest. But you don't make a movie with some heavy-handed message like [dopey voice], 'Hey everyone, stop cutting down the rainforest.' That's not what *FernGully* is; it's an adventure movie about bravery and curiosity and betrayal and love and discovery. Sue and I didn't start out to hit people over the head, or elicit a specific political response; our intention was to make an entertaining film. When the audience comes out [of the theater], hopefully they'll emerge with a [better understanding of the threat to the rainforest] and take a look in the mirror and do what they can to help stop it."

Director Bill Kroyer admits he wouldn't have helmed *FernGully* "had it not been for the subject matter."

Casting the film was relatively simple, according to Kroyer. Samantha Mathis voices Crysta, a spunky fairy with a sense of adventure; Christian Slater is Pips, her protective but mischievous elfin sweetheart. (Both actors co-starred in *Pump Up the Volume*.) Jonathan Ward plays Zak, the teenage boy whose live-for-today philosophy is turned upside-down when he joins a logging team. Robin Williams is Batty Koda, a brain-scrambled fruit bat who was once a lab experiment, and, not surprisingly, is hostile to humans. *Twin Peaks*' Grace Zabriskie plays Magi Lune, the aging mentor of the nature spirits who hopes to pass on to Crysta the magic of the rainforest, while Tim Curry (STARLOG #106) voices Hexxus, a creature of destruction released by the loggers from his prison inside an enchanted tree.

"Animated films are really easy to cast, because they don't involve much work for actors; it's not like you're asking a big-name actor to make a big [time] commitment," Kroyer reveals. "In that respect, you have access to many actors—if you have a good project and credibility. We had both. But we didn't want a celebrity cast; we were interested in getting the best performers for the roles. We happened to end up with some pretty big celebrities, like Christian Slater and Robin Williams, whose character had been conceived for him; but at the time [of casting], Christian Slater wasn't that big. Also, Samantha Mathis and Jonathan Ward were all but unknown...even Grace Zabriskie wasn't that famous. Many people read for these roles. We probably had 30 girls read for Crysta alone."

According to Kroyer, Robin Williams' voice is "married perfectly" with his dingbat character, Batty Koda.

While Kroyer praises his entire cast—Mathis "embodied" her character when she walked in for the audition, he notes, and Williams' voice "married perfectly with his character"—it is the "red-neck, blue-collar humans," Tony and Ralph (animated by Chuck Gammage), who all but steal the movie, in his opinion.

"The two guys who played Tony and Ralph [Robert Pastorelli and Jeffrey Blake], who drive the logging machine, did a really great job. They made those parts. Those roles weren't in the original story. We invented them in the storyboarding. We were screwing around with the logging machine, and [animation director] Tony Fucile did a drawing of the *silhouettes*—just the silhouettes—of the two guys inside the cab. That silhouette was so hilarious and so descriptive that we thought, 'Let's make those guys into characters.'

"So, Tony went in and did their designs off the silhouettes and created these two guys, Tony and Ralph—named after Tony Fucile and (art director/color stylist) Ralph Eggleston. Tony is big and heavy-set like Tony Fucile, and Ralph is skinny and neurotic like Ralph Eggleston. Then, we got Robert and Jeffrey to do the voices; almost every line they spoke was ad-libbed—they were hilarious, an absolute riot."

(continued on page 66)

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FernGully

(continued from page 64)

While Kroyer knows of the *Captain Planet* TV series and the upcoming environmental-themed animated feature *Once Upon a Forest*, being developed by Hanna-Barbera, he doesn't believe any project's environmental message will guarantee success. "It doesn't matter if it's environmental or not, as far as box-office goes. If a movie is good, people will go to see it. If the movie is mediocre, it doesn't matter what the message is—*no one* will go see it. You could make a movie about bottle caps, and if it's great, you could make $100 million. On the other hand, you could make a movie about Mother Teresa and if it's boring, forget it."

Comparisons to Disney's *Beauty & the Beast* are "inevitable," Kroyer says, but "they don't worry me. We've measured up from the beginning in concept; I think Disney stays to a relatively bland, clichéd formula, although they execute it brilliantly. It wasn't possible for us to compete with them in pure technique; they just have too many people and too much money. But as far as performances, I would put ours up against theirs, any day."

Kroyer is proud of the fact that some of the film's profits are going toward helping the environment. The actors were paid "day scale." At Wayne Young's suggestion, and with the actors' consent, a percentage of the movie's profits, both net and gross (including profits from the box-office, video and soundtrack sales), will be donated in their names to the Smithsonian Institute, which will then distribute the money to "legitimate rainforest causes," a first for an environmental movie, according to Kroyer.

With the film's Easter release date nearing, Bill Kroyer admits that the pressure he's feeling is new to him. "I've never gone through this before," he confesses. "I've been in animation for 20 years, and I've never had my work [scrutinized by] the general public. I don't know how I'm going to react to any rejection or failure or success, or whatever comes. I've always just tried to take satisfaction in doing the best job I could do.

"When people see *FernGully*, it's going to be 70 minutes of stuff they've never seen in an animated film. Everything is real: Every plant, flower and animal exists in that rainforest. This wonderful, fanciful, and magical world we didn't have to make up; It's really all there. People will probably come out of the movie thinking, 'Wouldn't it be nice if that was real?' Hey, it *is* real. All you have to do is prevent it from being destroyed.' "

Schultz's "curvaceous women" are one reason why he thinks his *Xenozoic Tales* is "a 'guilty pleasure' comic."

Schultz

(continued from page 16)

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs will run vertically down the left side of the cover.

"Denis Kitchen came up with that title for the first *Xenozoic* collection, and it captured people's imaginations," Schultz explains. "But we couldn't use it without General Motors' permission. By the time Marvel Comics made us an offer to do a series of color reprints of the first few issues, there was no problem, and they opted for the catchier title to differentiate between the black and white book and the reprints. It just caught on from there."

Kitchen Sink has long had a reputation for producing innovative collectibles, and decided to try *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* candy bars. The chocolate was so-so, but the Schultz-illustrated wrappers and ornate presentation box were a big hit, as were a series of postcards issued last year. According to Schultz, there will be more candy bars, with three different wrappers and a modified box, a Nintendo-compatible video game, a possibly animated TV show, and maybe even a feature film.

"We have an agreement with a company in Hollywood, but you never know how these things are going to go. One of the people involved was a producer on *The Doors* and another executive helped develop *RoboCop*, so their credentials are good and I'm hopeful. Still," he sighs, "it's much more complicated to make a movie than draw a comic book."

Whatever happens, Mark Schultz is certain of one thing. "I've only scratched the surface of the Xenozoic Universe and there are so many more stories to tell. At the day's end, that's the biggest thrill for me, getting paid to be a storyteller."

And drawing dinosaurs.

Starlin

(continued from page 48)

Avengers some years ago and there was a romance between the Scarlet Witch and the Vision. Steve eventually consummated their relationship, had them marry and settle down in the suburbs. He wanted things to go that way because he was a fan of those characters, but all interest in them then went right out the window.

"Certainly you must believe a little bit of it's real, and the characters have to be real to me. Their powers, the flying and stuff, you kind of graft on—but you also have to keep your distance.

"I know one writer, whose name I won't mention, who *lives* his characters. He really believes they're real; they're like family to him. He has a very hard time handling reality, because he's so involved in writing about them. I try to keep my distance. I don't allow myself to think that Batman or Adam Warlock or anybody else is real. They exist in my head, on the page and *nowhere else*. Every time I talk to this particular writer, I realize you can go too far. I get a creepy feeling when I'm around him."

Starlin retains a balance by having a studio away from his house. "I have to walk across a field to get to it, which is a big help. I've got work separated from my real life. I once talked to inker Jack Abel, who worked at home the way I used to, and he told me that every time he went to the bathroom, he felt like he was losing money. I thought, 'This is no way to live.' So, once I bought a house up in the woods, the first thing I did was build a studio. This way, I have that necessary separation. I don't hang around with many artists either. I have real-life friends.

"I tend to think of myself as a storyteller more than a writer. I consider someone like James Joyce a writer; people like Arthur Conan Doyle, Robert E. Howard or Stephen King as more storytellers. In comics, we're not trying to open the human soul to anyone. We're not getting into the inner depths of the mind. We're not doing art with a capital A. We're doing entertainment. If there's some nice stuff in between the pages of adventure, that's fine, but it's not the main consideration.

"This is what I want to do. I have access to book publishers, and if I wanted to, I could now write the Great American Novel, with plenty of angst and people talking in round-about, confusing and subtle manners," says Jim Starlin.

"Basically, what I need to do is tell stories. I couldn't do *Death of a Salesman*. That's *not* where I'm at."

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WELL, SHOOT! TIM BURTON'S BATMAN MOVIE SURE HAS A LOT OF COOL BAT GADGETS, DOESN'T IT?
AND HOW ABOUT THE BATCAVE, NERVE CENTER OF BATMAN'S OPERATION?
I BET ALL OF THOSE VIDEO SCREENS IN THE BATCAVE SURE COME IN HANDY AROUND BIG OL' WAYNE MANOR!
THERE THEY ARE! IN BATHROOM NUMBER 15.
REMEMBER THAT SCENE WHERE JOKER ASKS:
WHERE DOES HE GET THOSE WONDERFUL TOYS?!
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BLAM!
...THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S GOT A TOLL-BOOTH WARNING AND REMOVAL SYSTEM!
HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW THE CAPED CRUSADER MAKES EVERYTHING INTO THE SHAPE OF A BAT?
OH, YES, IT'S VERY NICE! IT'S JUST THAT A BAT-SHAPED FOOTBALL SEEMS... WELL... STUPID.
IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE BAT-THERAPY. SHEESH!
:WHIMPER:
LET'S HOPE WE SEE MORE BAT-GADGETS IN THE FUTURE!
BAT HAT
ZIG FUTURA

COMICS screen

All projects are live-action unless specified. Those boxed are new/updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** Legend: S: script; D: director; P: producer; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; Nel: Nelvana; MWS: Murakami Wolf Swenson; RB: Rankin-Bass; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; FF: Funnybook Films. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 3/16/92)

The Addams Family. Sequel. PP. AN series. ABC. HB. Fall.

The Airtight Garage. AN. S: Randy Lofficier.

Aladdin. AN film. WD. '92.

Alias. Film. U. S: David S. Goyer. P: P. Lenkov. S: Daniel.

❑ **Alice in Wonderland.** TV series. Disney Channel.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

American Tail. AN Saturday a.m. TV series. Fall.

Animaniacs. AN syn TV. WB/Amblin. Fall '93.

❑ **Annie.** Stage musical sequel. *Annie Warbucks.* D: Martin Charnin. S: Thomas Meehan. Music: C. Strouse.

Ant-Man. Film.

Archie. LA Film. S: N. & D. Ephron. D: J. Schumacher. DIC.

Baby Huey. AN short. U. S: Bill Kopp.

❑ **Bad Boy.** AN TV series project. Imagination Factory/Film Roman.

Barbarella. TV. Nelvana.

Barbie. Film. Abrams/Gentile Ent. & Mattel.

❑ **Batman.** *Batman Returns.* S: Dan Waters. Wes Strick. D: Tim Burton. WB. June. AN series. Fall. Fox. (see article)

Battletoads. TV pilot.

Beakman's World. Syn LA series. Based on *You Can with Beakman.* Col.

Bebe's Kids. AN film. S: Reginald Hudlin. Hyperion/PP.

Beetlejuice. AN series. ABC. video & FBC. Film sequel.

Betty Boop. Film. D: R. Fleischer.

Blackhawk. Film Amblin. S: Dan Aykroyd.

Blackman. Film.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & Bill Rabkin.

Blinky Bill. Australian AN film. P: Yoram Gross. '92.

Photo: Copyright 1992 Showtime Networks Inc.

Finally, Jay Ward's *Boris & Natasha* (Dave Thomas, Sally Kellerman) make their appearance—as a Showtime original movie (which begins airing this month). John Candy, Andrea Martin and John Travolta co-star.

❑ **Blondie.** Film. WB. P: Joel Silver.

James Bond. Syn AN series. *James Bond Jr.* MWS.

Bonkers D. Bobcat. Syn AN series. WD. Fall '93.

Boogiemanland. AN. Nel. Fox.

❑ **Brave Little Toaster.** AN film sequel. Hyperion

Bucky O'Hare. Syn AN.

Bugs Bunny. *Termite Terrace.* LA/AN film.

❑ **Bullwinkle.** *Boris & Natasha* film. Will debut on Showtime. April '92.

❑ **Capitol Critters.** AN. ABC. Likely cancellation.

Captain America. Film.

Captain Planet. AN series.

Casper. Film. Amblin.

❑ **Cats.** AN film reinstated, then shelved again. Amblin.

Charlie Chan. Film. S/D: D. Mamet. P: Kirkwood, Hyde.

❑ **Chester Cheetah.** AN. Nel. Fox. Still in development.

Chicken Man. AN spoof series. Calico

Classics Illustrated. AN series. DIC.

Cobalt 60. AN film.

Conan. Film sequel. S: CE Pogue. *Conan the Adventurer.* Syn AN series. 13 episodes. Fall. Claster TV/Sunbow.

Concrete. Film. S: (D) L. Wilson, C. Thompson. P: Tim Burton

Cool World. AN/LA film. PP. D: Ralph Bakshi.

The Crow. Film. S: John Shirley. D: Alex Proyce. P: Ed Pressman

❑ **Crusader Rabbit.** New AN series. In development. Fox

❑ **Cyberpunk.** Film. S: Steve Roberts. Imagination Factory.

Danger Squad. Film. P/D: Leo Fong. W/D: P.R. Cable.

Darkwing Duck. AN syn & ABC series.

Deathlok. Film.

Dennis the Menace. Film. P: John Hughes. WB. *Dennis the Musical.* Broadway. S: Ernest Chambers Music: Jeff Church. Lyrics: Richard Enquist. Chambers Fall '92?

❑ **Dinosaurs for Hire.** AN series. In development. Fox.

Dr. Off. Film. Black superhero spoof. P: Tim Reid.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: F. Coppola.

Doug. AN. Nickelodeon

Dudley Do-Right. Film. PP.

❑ **Eek the Cat.** AN. Fox. D: Savage Steve Holland. Fall.

Elfquest. Film/TV. Abby Lou Prod, Freedom Distrib.

Evangeline. Film. FF.

Family Dog. AN series. CBS. Amblin/Nel. Debut delayed.

❑ **Fantastic Four.** Film. EP: Stan Lee. D: Max Kleven. Constantin Film.

Far Side. AN TV.

Fearless Fosdick. LA. Nel.

❑ **Fish Police.** AN series HB. CBS. Likely cancellation.

The Flintstones. Film. Fred: John Goodman. D: Richard Donner. U/Amblin. AN TV films. S: J. Romano.

Garfield. AN series.

❑ **George of the Jungle.** On video. four of 13 volumes debut April. CBS Fox Video.

G.I. Joe. Film. S: Anthony & John Gentile. WB.

Goofy. Syn AN series *Goof Troop.* WD. Premieres fall.

The Green Arrow. TV. P: Danny Bilson. Paul DeMeo.

The Green Hornet. Film. S: D. Mancini. P: D. Kirschner. U.

Hopalong Cassidy. Film. S: G. Popper, J. Rosenthal.

❑ **Human Target.** Series. ABC. R. Springfield. P: D. Bilson. P. De Meo, L. Lyttle.

Inspector Gadget. New AN TV series. DIC.

❑ **Iron Man.** Film. Universal dropped it.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

❑ **Jonny Quest.** AN TV movie. HB. X-Mas.

Judge Dredd. Film. Fox. P: C. Lippincott. Ed Pressman. '93

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. D: Tim Burton. S: L. Wilson, C. Thompson. P: Burton, Wilson, D. Di Novi, W. Hill. Carolco.

Mandrake. Film.

The Mask. Film. New Line.

❑ **The Meteor Man.** Film. S/D: Robert Townsend. Teacher, who gets super powers from meteors, "cleans up" his neighborhood. MGM. X-Mas.

❑ **Mother Goose & Grimm.** AN series. CBS. (see article)

Nancy. Film. P: P. Muller.

❑ **Negative Man.** Bob Kane hero. (see article)

Neil the Horse. AN/LA.

Ninja High School. AN video. U.K. Sun Planning.

❑ **Once Upon a Forest.** AN film. Fox/HB.

❑ **Pirates of Dark Water.** AN series. Probable cancellation.

Plastic Man. Film. WB/Amblin. S: Larry Wilson.

Power Pack. TV pilot. S: J. Brett. N World/Paragon.

❑ **Prince Valiant.** AN series. Family Channel. LA Film. S: Michael Beckner. Constantin Film. P: Bernd Eichinger. Jim Gorman.

The Punisher. Sequel?

Radio Boy. AN. RB.

Reid Fleming. Film. S: creator David Boswell. P: M. Weisman. J. Loeb II.

Ren & Stimpy. AN. Nickelodeon.

Richie Rich. Film. P: J. Silver, J. Davis. S: Neil Tolkin.

RoboCop 3. S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker (D). Summer.

Roger Rabbit. Prequel film. *Who Discovered Roger Rabbit.* D: Rob Minkoff. WD. New short "Hare in My Soup."

Rogue Trooper. Film. D: Peter Hewitt. P: Joel Silver.

Rugrats. AN. Nickelodeon.

Rupert the Bear. AN. Nel. 13 half-hours.

❑ **The Shadow.** Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. U. Summer shooting scheduled.

The She-Hulk. Film. S/D: Larry Cohen. B. Nielsen.

The Silver Surfer. Film. EP: Stan Lee. Constantin Film.

The Simpsons. AN. FBC. Now animated by Film Roman.

Speed Racer. Film. S: (D) Patrick Johnson, John Lau. P: J. Silver, R. Donner. WB. '93?

❑ **Spider-Man.** Film. D: Jim Cameron. Carolco. Studio's financial problems may delay project. Stage musical. S & lyrics: B. Harman. Music: K. Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee. D: J. Nash, J. Calamari.

❑ **Starwatcher.** AN film. P: Alain Guiot/Videosystem. EP: Ridley Scott. S: Moebius & J. Fryszman. D: Moebius, Keith Ingham.

Superboy. Syn TV.

Super-Dave. AN. DIC.

Superman. *Superman: The New Movie.* S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. To lense in FL.

Super Mario Bros. LA film. S: Barry Morrow. D. DeVito.

Swamp Thing. TV. USA.

Tales from the Crypt. HBO. Renewed for 4th season.

Tales from the Hart. TV. P: Aaron Spelling.

Tarzan. Syn TV series.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. LA sequel shoots June. AN series. CBS, Syn.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. AN TV series. Kushner-Locke.

❑ **Time Cop.** Film. D: Sam Raimi.

Tintin. AN series. HBO.

Tom & Jerry. AN film. P/D: Phil Roman. Spring '93.

Toxic Crusaders. LA film. Troma/New Line.

Trouble with Girls. Film. Fox/FF. S: W. Jacobs, G. Jones. P: M. Pepler, N. Tabachnick.

Ultraman. TV series.

Valentina. TV series. Dementra Hampton. Reteitalia.

Vampirella. Film. S/D: Jim Wynorski.

V for Vendetta. Film. WB. S: Hilary Henkin.

❑ **WARP.** Film. S/P: Victor & Grais. Unlikely.

Watchmen. Film. P: J. Silver. D: T. Gilliam. Largo.

❑ **We're Back.** AN film. Amblin London/U. Delayed until fall '93.

Why I Hate Saturn. TV.

Wild Cards. Film. Disney. S: George R.R. Martin. P: Michael Engelberg.

Wizard of Id. Film. Cinergi.

Wolverine. Film.

❑ **Woof.** AN/LA TV pilot. ABC/TriStar.

❑ **The X-Men.** AN TV series. Fox. Fall. Marvel/Saban. Film. Carolco. P: Jim Cameron.

Zen. Film. AN series.

Zorro. Film. D: Steven Spielberg. S: Nancy Larson. Tri-Star. TV series. Family Chan.

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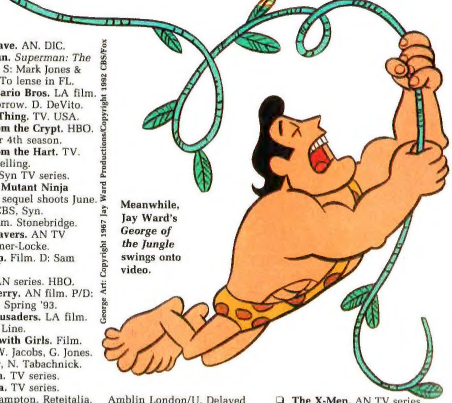

Meanwhile, Jay Ward's *George of the Jungle* swings onto video.

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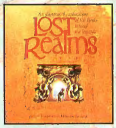

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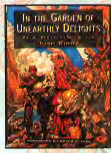

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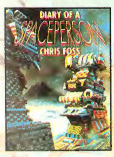

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9. Phone or fax credit card orders! Call 9-6 pm Mon-Fri (EST). Fax anytime to 703-347-2156.
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